THE NEAR EAST FROM WITHIN

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Peter I. of Servia

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By

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With Thirteen Half-tone Illustrations

SECOND AUTHORIZED EDITION

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

This book was originally published by us in conjunction with Messrs. Cassell & Company, Limited, London, England, during the Autumn of 1915. It met with immediate favour, two editions being imported in response to public demand!

Owing to war regulations which made necessary the conservation of paper in Great Britain, the English publishers were unable to print additional copies and the book passed out of print in the original format. The continuance of the public interest as evidenced by constant inquiry has induced us to reprint the work in a new and popular priced form.

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PREFACE TO THE SECOND AUTHORIZED AMERICAN EDITION

THIS new edition of the "Near East from Within," is offered once more to the public by its original Publishers, with the knowledge and full consent of its author, who resides for the present in the United States. Author and Publishers think it right to state that the volume was never at any time, either here or in England, withdrawn from circulation. The book simply went out of print, owing to the shortage of paper in Great Britain. The rumour which will have it that the British government exercised a pressure to have the volume withdrawn, is also based only on the imagination of the people who put it into circulation. Neither the author of the book, nor its English, nor its American, Publishers, would ever have thought of bringing out anything which could not be approved of by the Allied governments, the more so that the book was essentially written as propaganda against Germany. This alone disposes of other insinuations which could be interpreted in the sense that the German government had tried to buy up the edition with a view to preventing its circulation, because neither the Author nor the Publishers of the said work are people who could be bribed by anyone. They think that this plain

statement will dispose of the idle gossip that has hovered around a publication which its Author did not think deserved the fuss that has been made about it and they wish once more to state that the present edition is the only authorised one in the United States of America.

THE AUTHOR.

New York, September 5, 1918.

PREFACE TO THE FIRST AUTHORIZED EDITION

IT has so happened that many years of my life have been spent in the by-paths of European politics. At times a silent observer, not seldom a mere cog in the great wheel, or again, entrusted with operations of diplomatic moment, circumstances made me acquainted with the mysteries and under-currents of political life and of diplomatic intrigue in many parts of the world. Latterly, things which I did not understand seem to have become clear. Events, the significant purport of which I did not earlier realise, now stand out vivid and strong from the chambers of my memory. Trifles have become invested with prime importance.

When the war broke out it seemed my duty to remain silent. It were of little avail to add to the bitterness and hatred which sounded on every hand. Yet I had many a debate with myself as to how far loyalty demanded a veiling of matters which, once made known, would throw into truer focus the inner history of the Balkan and allied Eastern troubles, and their root causes, during the last twenty years.

Rightly or wrongly, I arrived at the decision that my greater duty was to mankind rather than to a man.

Hence these impressions of Eastern affairs as observed in the course of my passing from capital to capital, and as told me by one or other of certain people who were active in propagating the influence of their respective Governments.

Whether I shall succeed in capturing the interest of the reader is not for me to say. The only thing which I can assure those who read the pages that follow is, that whereas they perhaps may find several matters to shock or distress, they will not come across any that are consciously exaggerated.

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THE NEAR EAST FROM WITHIN

CHAPTER I

SULTAN ABDUL HAMID: HIS PERSONALITY AND POLICY

IN my goings to and fro among the cities of Europe it was my lot to visit Constantinople on several occasions. The first time was in 1888, and by good fortune I saw Abdul Hamid the very next day after my arrival—one Friday—during his weekly visit to the Mosque. Certain friends of mine secured for me a place whence I could see this ceremony of the Selamlik, as the procession of the Sultan is called.

Promptly at the arranged hour we arrived at the little landing-place of Beshiktash, close by the mosque of the same name. This landing-stage is quite small, but has the advantage of being near to Yildiz Kiosk, the home of the Sultan. We were received by a master of ceremonies, who placed at our disposal a private room, forming part of a guard-house. From this vantage-point we could see the procession as it defiled past our windows into the square which fronts the mosque.

It was a pompous sight, not devoid of quaintness, but far less Oriental than I had been led to imagine.

The Sultan himself was riding a white horse harnessed in Eastern style, but he was so surrounded by eunuchs, guards, and high officials that I could scarcely catch a glimpse of his impassive, dark face. As he was leaving the mosque, however, I had better fortune. He stood for a few minutes on its threshold, gazing at the troops which marched before him with an earnest, severe expression in his eyes that irresistibly attracted my attention.

Abdul Hamid did not impress me as either prepossessing or imposing, for his figure was bent and there was little regality in his countenance. But for all that, his was one of those faces that cannot fail to seize upon the imagination. There was such a sense of power, such a conviction of an unlimited right of life and death over those who surrounded him, that even strangers unaware of his identity seldom mistook him for anyone else than the Sultan.

It has often been said that Abdul Hamid was a tyrant. I do not believe it. He lacked the backbone of a tyrant. He could be guilty of surpassing cruelty, but more from the continually haunting fear of assassination than from inherent wickedness.

His early impressions had been utterly sad, and the first years of his life—spent, as they had been, in semi-imprisonment—had made him naturally distrustful of everybody and everything.

I learned more of the Sultan's earlier history from my circle, some of whom had spent many years in Pera. Pera is that part of the city in which the embassies are

situated, and where the foreign population find habitation as distinct from the native Turks, who congregate in and about Stamboul, on the other side of the Golden Horn. For some ethnological reason, as if Constantinople were off the map of Europe, Pera is called the European quarter—the Christian quarter would be more correct.

In the pleasant days of my first visit, while idling in Perean drawing-rooms, or sight-seeing in Stamboul or Galata, or venturing across the Bosphorus to explore Scutari, many things were told me about Abdul. My own observation, too, on this and the only other visit I paid to the Sublime Porte in his reign gave me added insight into Abdul's character.

When he became Sultan he early became obsessed with the idea that it was necessary to resort to any measures, however questionable, to keep his throne. Though his education had been neglected, he had considerable natural intelligence, with which he combined a cunning such as the East alone can produce.

He was a clever politician, but he had neither patriotic nor noble instincts. He gave one the impression that the fate of Turkey was a matter of profound indifference to him beside that of his own future. Abdul well knew that the security of his throne depended on the position his country would be able to maintain, as well as on the measure of its development amid the various intrigues that permeated every aspect of life in the Ottoman Empire.

Above everything else, so one who for years was in

the confidence of the Sultan told me, he would have preferred a quiet life in the privacy of his harem. That he could not do so proved a source of continual dissatisfaction and sorrow, but nevertheless it was not idle regret; rather, it caused him to give considerable attention to European affairs. Events showed very clearly to those behind the scenes how ingeniously he contrived to arrange things in such a way that his alliance and co-operation came to be sought after. Abdul Hamid was clever enough to see what really lay under many of the protestations of friendship about which he heard so much from certain European Powers. He realised that such attempts to approach him or to obtain his help proceeded rather from the desire to win an advantage of some kind than from the wish to cultivate good relations with him or with his government.

With this feeling in his mind, Abdul adjusted his actions accordingly, and treated any advances with a craftiness that ended in his being distrusted by nearly every European Power and despised by every European Sovereign almost without exception.

At the same time, by the mere fact of his occupation of the throne of Mahmoud II. and of the Great Suleiman, he was one of the most important royal personages of the Continent. This factor was one apt to be lost sight of, the more easily because there existed the feeling that his tenancy of the throne would be short. Abdul Hamid himself, to a high degree, shared the feeling that he was destined to be overthrown by a palace revolution of the

kind which had hurled his predecessors from the throne into a prison whence they never more emerged alive. He knew that stability was the one thing which he lacked, and so he thought he could replace it by tyranny. He failed to realise that tyranny also breeds revolution.

To me, and probably to most other people, Abdul Hamid was an enigma. His character was truly Oriental, as I had reason to experience personally, and not the least of his mannerisms was his consistent concealment of his true thoughts. Few even among the people who saw him daily and in whom he appeared—outwardly, at least—to confide, ever guessed what was really in his mind. He carried this quality so far that he succeeded in hiding from everyone the fact that he knew the French language to perfection.

In this way Abdul Hamid was able later on to pretend that what foreign ambassadors told him had not been properly interpreted, or, again, that he had not grasped the proper meaning of communications made to him.

This fact is one of far more importance in the turnings of Fate than at first becomes apparent. Not unlikely Europe would have been spared vexatious or even bloody complications had not the wiliness of Abdul in this direction led him to be hoist with his own petard. I had it from the lips of Baron Marschall von Bieberstein himself that, so far as he knew, the only person who perceived the deception was the Emperor William II., who, whilst on his visit to Constantinople, during an interview which he had with the Sultan, suddenly sent away the interpreter,

and then, turning on his discomfited host, bluntly told him that they had better discuss alone what they had to say, because he knew very well that they could understand each other without any outside help.

Abdul Hamid was so taken by surprise that he could not find words to deny the assertion, and it was only when the conversation came to an end that he begged his guest not to reveal to others the secret he had penetrated. The reply was typical of the Emperor: "You may rest quiet as to that point," he said. "It is far more to my interest than to yours that the world should think you do not understand French, and that, in consequence, you were unable to discuss politics with me."

I have mentioned the incident because it throws a certain light on subsequent events. The Commander of the Faithful and the all-powerful Kaiser had learned to gauge each other's strength and to realise that an alliance might in time bring about great events. But in this game the advantage remained for a long while on the side of Abdul Hamid, who knew to a nicety how to use his position to advantage. He constantly played Germany against Russia and Russia against England, and in that way obtained considerable loans—which he used for his personal extravagances more often than for his country's needs.

It is a tribute to his skill in playing the game of politics on the chessboard of Europe that almost invariably we discovered that, whenever he was threatened by a conspiracy at home or by aggression from abroad,

Abdul had contrived that one or other of the great Powers should interfere on his behalf.

Looking backward over the reign of Abdul Hamid, the conclusion of the historian would doubtless be that Turkey had retained its political importance during his tenure of the throne, but had shown a palpable intellectual decline. The Young Turk movement and initial impetus for the emancipation of women were only elusive signs of progress, and in reality meant little in the way of national enlightenment. The police effectually barred progress on the road of civilisation and of culture. Ambition was an unknown quantity, because there was daily the danger of becoming a victim of the secret police, whose sway was the more formidable in that it was the only institution in the Ottoman Empire which could not be bought or sold, owing to the fact that it was controlled entirely by the Sultan, who reserved to himself the sole right to dispose of people who fell under his displeasure.

Every morning the official in charge of this important department reported at Yildiz Kiosk what had taken place in Constantinople during the preceding twenty-four hours. Especially was this activity displayed in the foreign and diplomatic quarters, and also in regard to certain progressive Turkish families. The number of secret executions that took place during the reign is generally credited to be enormous; quite often a man or woman suddenly vanished, after having gone out for a walk, or whilst making a call. Abdul Hamid believed that the best way to render his enemies harmless was to an-

nihilate them at once. Before he came to the throne he had witnessed so many palace conspiracies, been present at the discussion of so many plots against the Sovereign of the day, that perhaps it is not to be wondered that he always expected to find a foe lurking behind some curtain in order to assassinate him.

The precautions with which the Sultan surrounded himself at Yildiz Kiosk were altogether extraordinary. Quite by chance one day I happened upon a jealously guarded secret, one which, I believe, has never until now been made public. I refer to the curious fact that the head of his service of secret spies and bodyguards was a German ex-detective, whose mission it had been in previous years to watch over the safety of the Emperor William I. The prophets have it that William II. recommended him to Abdul Hamid during the visit to which I have already alluded. So long as that man remained at his post, not one of the many plots against the Sultan succeeded. This prince of secret agents died shortly before the culmination of the conspiracy which hurled Abdul from his throne.

There is little doubt that when William II. paid his visit to Constantinople he hoped to persuade the Sultan to enter into an alliance with Germany. He did not succeed; partly because he displayed far too much eagerness, thus giving the Turkish Government an inflated idea of its own influence since its co-operation was so pertinaciously sought by the monarch whom they believed to be the most powerful in Europe. Another element

in the failure of William II. was that Abdul Hamid wisely inferred that it might be more profitable to see whether he could not secure better conditions elsewhere.

It was most amusing to watch the details of this game of diplomatic chess. By thus playing off one embassy against another, the Ottoman monarch gained years of quietness, and in a certain degree afforded greater facilities for expansion and development to his people than he could have done under different conditions. When the Serbs or Bulgarians annoyed the Turkish Empire, when England clamoured for some concession of a commercial nature, when Russia threatened an invasion of Asia Minor, the Sultan sent for the particular ambassador accredited at his Court, and contrived to smooth over the difficulty which had arisen, mostly by promising something. If matters became desperate, he appealed to his good friend William II., who seemed to think it his imperative duty to watch over the welfare of the Turk.

In the meantime minor matters—or, at least, what in the eyes of Abdul were of minor importance—such as the concession of the Bagdad Railway, were granted to the enterprising Teutons. And more valuable still, the German Ambassador, Baron Marschall von Bieberstein, contrived to gain the confidence of Abdul Hamid, and fondly believed that thereby he had established himself as the paramount voice in his councils.

Baron Marschall von Bieberstein was perhaps the one man in the whole world who was absolutely instructed as to the real aims of the policy pursued by William II.,

and I have always held the opinion that it was partly upon his advice that the Emperor adopted the attitude toward the world at large which so successfully led people astray as to his ultimate object.

Clever, insinuating in spite of his gruff manners and love for plain speaking, Baron von Marschall was the most profound student of human nature it has ever been my fortune to meet. He could gauge the moral and intellectual worth of a man with unerring accuracy after only a few moments' conversation with him. He had fathomed at once the cowardice, barbarity, and Eastern cunning which made up the real Abdul Hamid. He understood admirably how to play upon these qualities as occasion required. More than that, he had managed to secure secret allies in the very precincts of Yildiz Kiosk. I will not say that the representatives of other Powers had not also succeeded in securing interested influence and sources of private information and advice, but it always seemed to me that in this respect the Baron had outdistanced other diplomatic workers. There was not only the police agent of whom I have already spoken, but also the chief eunuch, and, too, a favourite slave of the Padishah, a Christian girl who had unbounded influence over him, principally on account of the enmity with which the other inhabitants of the harem regarded her.

The mention of this woman tempts me to dwell upon the undoubted fact that in the Ottoman Empire political exigencies are at the mercy of the merest incident and swayed too often by the inner currents of Turkish life

which are, and will long remain, impenetrable mysteries to the foreigner.

Apart from his love of money, Abdul Hamid had no other great passions. Sensual like all Orientals, he did not care for women beyond the brutal satisfaction which he derived from their possession. Love was unknown to him, and yet he fell under the influence of the woman just referred to, who contrived to worm herself into his entire confidence and to become his associate in many plans and many designs. Well educated, exceedingly clever and intriguing, this Christian woman whom circumstances had thrown into the Imperial Harem was but too glad to take part in a political conspiracy of magnitude. Up to a certain point she became a pawn in the diplomatic game played by Baron Marschall von Bieberstein, being in some measure associated with him in the attempts which he made to secure Abdul Hamid's acquiescence in the plans of the Emperor William II.

To a man of the perception of Baron von Marschall it was not difficult to discover what a precious ally this woman could be. For the purpose of this narrative we will call her Amina. Bieberstein flattered her, made her lavish presents, flashed brilliant prospects before her eyes, and even allowed Amina to think that, should Turkey enter thoroughly into the plans of Germany, she would find herself strongly supported in her ambition to be recognised as the only legitimate wife of Abdul Hamid.

Other diplomats had attempted to approach her; among others, Count Corti, who for a good many years

held the post of Italian Ambassador at Constantinople, and who had been the first to realise the power of the harem to decide the most momentous questions. All the efforts of these gentlemen failed utterly; Amina refused to listen to them. Baron von Marschall's tactics were different: he first discovered who were the Turkish ladies admitted to the intimacy of the harem, and induced one of them to represent him as an admirer of Amina. Then one day he arranged matters so that he found himself in the bazaar bargaining over some carpets and turquoises, at the same moment as the Sultan's favourite. A liberal baksheesh distributed to the eunuchs who accompanied Amina, and to the Persian in whose shop they were permitted to remain alone for a few minutes, he forthwith told the young inmate of the Imperial Harem that he had heard so much about her that he felt sure she would respond to his appeal and use her influence over the Sultan, which he knew was great, to induce Abdul to accept certain promises which emanated from Berlin.

The recital—told me with every evidence of truth and borne out by circumstances within my own knowledge—continues that he pictured the brilliant results that would accrue, the power that would become Abdul's, and incidentally Amina's, if they allowed his master William II. to help Turkey re-establish once more the wide sway of Mohammedanism. Amina fell into the snare, and henceforward Germany secured a powerful ally in the immediate surroundings of the Sultan, one who, too, kept von Marschall regularly informed of what was asked of the

Sultan and of what he planned to do. Through the knowledge so gained the German diplomat was able to win Abdul Hamid over to his opinion or to secure his endorsement of some secret action the Baron had received instructions from Berlin to recommend.

These private messages emanated, not from the Foreign Office, but from the Emperor William himself in holograph letters which were forwarded by special messengers. On one occasion, when a communication of more than usual moment had arrived, Abdul Hamid, persuaded by Amina, consented to receive Baron Marschall von Bieberstein in the dead of the night. This confidential interview led to great things, because from that day Germany became a palpable factor in Turkish politics and administration.

For a number of years certain German military officers had been "on leave" in Constantinople. In this way, in 1883, von der Goltz laid the foundation of the work with which in later years his name was to be associated—the remodelling on German lines of the Ottoman army. Various missions also had been to and fro. It was noticeable, however, that after the appointment of Baron von Marschall less secrecy attached to German operations, that the reorganisation of the Turkish army under the auspices of officers of Teutonic origin was conducted with greater zeal, and was submitted to with less reluctance by the Mohammedan commanders.

When this work of training the army after European methods was first undertaken by Germany it was carried

out with indifferent success. The German officers were not enamoured of their task, and allowed their impatience, if not contempt, of Moslem soldiers to be seen. On the other hand, or perhaps as a result of this attitude, the rank and file of the Turkish army proved distinctly hostile to European discipline. The whole problem was beset with difficulty. The Turks of that day resented being commanded by a Christian officer. Moslems did not believe in European tactics, and the Turkish military leaders did not relish being ordered about by a newcomer and a foreigner at that.

When the war with Greece took place it was seen, however, that German influence had given the Turkish army a power previously lacking. Nevertheless the army complained that the so-called reforms had not given them a speedier and easier victory.

As was to be expected, too, all this time France and England continually combated the activity of the German military mission through their respective ambassadors; and, what with one thing and another, the great Teutonic effort to capture a dominating influence in Turkey seemed to collapse into insignificance, though I must say that England shut her eyes persistently to the state of affairs and was singularly apathetic just at the moment her great opportunity arose.

The inner reason for this decline of Teutonic influence was that the German mission had never been properly supported by Abdul Hamid, who at that time was in reality still hesitating as to which side he ought to take.

There was a moment when it would have been easy to bring him under French influence, but Russia either did not understand or else would not accept the hints which were made to her to declare herself openly as antagonistic to German influence. At the period to which I refer the Franco-Russian alliance was still in its infancy. Count de Montebello, the French Ambassador at Petrograd—or Petersburg as it was then—who, from the fact that he had been for some years in the same capacity at Constantinople, had a wide experience of both Turkey and the Sultan, did not attach sufficient importance to the possibility of German influence becoming paramount in the councils of Abdul. He therefore treated with indifference the efforts made by William II. to acquire a solid footing on the Bosphorus.

This capital mistake of a man who ought to have known better led ultimately to the loss of French prestige in Turkey, whilst the successive British Ambassadors in that country did not perceive the gradual weakening of the significance to the Turk of English power and England's position as the greatest Moslem monarchy in the world. Though at the time being it was not recognised, this fact was to have appalling consequences.

In those distant days, when Germany was first putting forth her efforts to get Turkey under her influence, many people wondered at the persistent interest which the German Emperor took in all matters concerning the military development of Turkey. Not a few wondered what induced him to show himself so well disposed to-

ward a nation which was evidently in the last stage of decay.

One day, after my return from Constantinople, I was at a diplomatic social gathering—those convenient events where one can make arrangements without a prying world wondering why So-and-so called upon another So-and-so —when a certain Princess L—— exchanged confidences with me. I told her much of Constantinople and its intrigues—much that did not matter, and she responded with vivacious gossip of the same calibre. But some of her words I have never forgotten, because they answered a question which had long been in my mind.

I had ventured to comment upon the mystery of the friendship that was becoming apparent with Turkey, when the Princess, with a laugh, said that I was trying to throw dust in her eyes, but that it was of no use, for she herself had heard the Emperor tell her husband that he was not an admirer of the Sultan, but he was the one man in the world who would prove the most useful to Germany later on.

He explained, continued Princess L——, that "Germany has far too many enemies for me to feel quiet respecting the years to come. Our naval supremacy is disputed by England as well as by France, and our uncle Edward, whenever he becomes King, which let us hope will not be so soon, will try his best to excite our enemies against us. Under these circumstances it would be to our advantage to have Turkey on our side, if only on account of the diversion which she might be induced to make by

an incursion into Egypt, which she would give much to snatch from under the English yoke. This would keep meddling England occupied, and after all this is what we want. If you think over all this you will then perhaps share my opinion that the Sultan as well as the welfare of Turkey cannot remain indifferent to me."

It was at this juncture that Baron Marschall von Bieberstein was appointed to Constantinople in October, 1897. Many people saw a significance in the fact that the ex-Secretary for Foreign Affairs should take this diplomatic post so soon, but two months after the signing of the Franco-Russian agreement, and were satisfied that it was a counter move to any possible revival of Russian influence at the Sublime Porte which the Tsar might feel inclined to attempt now that he had the possibility of French aid.

In sending von Marschall to Constantinople the German Emperor evinced his discernment. The influence of the new ambassador was not long in making itself manifest in an improved feeling. He was not looked upon with favour at Yildiz during the first days of his tenure of the embassy, but he speedily caused Abdul to change his attitude, in which he was aided by assurances from Berlin that he was, as it were, a very fine fellow indeed. Once he had removed Abdul's aloofness, the Baron sought to gain a friendly footing, and cast about him to discover persons likely to be amenable to suggestions of reciprocation for aiding him in his desire.

One of the outcomes of this delicate inquiry was von

Marschall's friendliness with Amina, which was brought about in the manner already related, and was an asset of considerable value in his diplomatic intrigues.

Just prior to the deposition of Abdul Hamid this tool of the German Ambassador was the heroine of an exciting adventure, in which one of the German Emperor's personal letters narrowly escaped falling into the hands of the last persons William II. would have wished to learn its contents. It would undoubtedly have been discovered by the Young Turks had it not been for the presence of mind of Amina, who hastily seized it from under the cushion where it had been hidden, and managed to throw it into a fire at the very moment the door of the sleeping apartment which she shared with Abdul Hamid was being forced. Later on she contrived to have William II. apprised of what she had done, and was handsomely rewarded for her prompt action.

It would, indeed, have been most awkward for the German Emperor had the contents of this letter been revealed, because it would have stood in direct opposition to some negotiations which he had undertaken against Abdul Hamid, who had so long persisted in the vacillating attitude which he had believed to be so clever that at last William II. had found out that he was being made a fool of. Thereupon he turned toward the Young Turk party, in whom he had thought it likely he would find more honest allies.

At that precise moment the subterranean activities of Baron von Marschall, who had all along warned the

Sultan that a conspiracy of a formidable nature was being hatched against him, had drawn the attention of a very intelligent Serb. This man himself had played a part of no little importance in the political disturbances of his own country. But this by the way; to return, he had seen through Bieberstein's diplomacy, and, returning from Turkey, had warned the Russian Government of the German intrigues that were going on at Constantinople. He argued that the ultimate issue of these undercurrents was the conclusion of a defensive and offensive alliance between Germany and the Ottoman Empire. The great bait for the Sultan was that thereby he might regain Egypt and Batoum, together with the fortress of Kars in Armenia. William II., on his part, professed to be satisfied by the certainty that, with the Sultan as his ally, should ever war break out between Germany and Russia, the latter would find her commerce in the Black Sea paralysed.

The Servian politician to whom I have referred had seen through that game, but, unfortunately, his warning to Petersburg had been disregarded. He was treated as a visionary who took for reality the product of a disordered imagination. For the Germans it was a good stroke of destiny that the one man who guessed the real nature of the aim pursued by William II. had been treated as a madman. Meanwhile German propaganda at the Sublime Porte was temporarily obscured, while other political events engrossed the attention of the world, and gradually Turkey came to be considered as a

dangerous element only on account of possible complications which the development of those different Slav States she had persecuted in long bygone ages might precipitate. Her fate seemed to be sealed, financially at least, and her enemies looked upon the final disintegration of the Ottoman Empire as a foregone conclusion.

In the meantime, unknown to all but the few prime movers, the reorganisation of her different institutions had begun, and Turkey was given to understand that if only she persevered in improving her military power she might yet prove in time a formidable surprise to those who had already discounted her death and disappearance from the political arena.

In saying that this was done in such secrecy that the world did not suspect, I am not quite correct. A small circle in Turkey guessed that something important was going on.

Out of this nebulous feeling of unrest the Young Turk party sprang into vigorous life. It had existed for years in a less formidable way and conducted a well-concealed campaign for the introduction under its ægis of truly progressive methods of government. Before long the party had some of the most important political men in the country on its side, and the movement was viewed with sympathy among all ranks of the army. Abdul's tenure of the throne was not opposed, but the corrupt administration; indeed, at one moment it was projected to induce the Sultan to lead the Constitutional party to final triumph. Abdul Hamid, however, was not the man

to accept such a situation, and very soon the energy with which he tried to break the power of the Committee of Union and Progress, as the Young Turks called their executive, made him more enemies than ever.

Things were in this condition of seething unrest in Constantinople when Enver Bey sprang into prominence. An incident about which I shall have something to say later on had made him acquainted with Baron von Marschall, who very quickly recognised the ambition that lay lurking behind the smile of this future hero of one of the most important revolutions of modern times. The Baron soon invited the Bey to his house and made friends with him, inducing him to talk about the feelings nourished among the army in regard to the Sultan. When he ascertained that a strong party existed who wished to get rid of Abdul Hamíd, he asked Enver Bey quite brusquely whether he would not undertake to head a revolution tending to dispossess the Sultan of a crown which he was wearing neither with dignity nor with valour.

Enver Bey was no fool, and at first turned a deaf ear to the German Ambassador. Curiously enough, while Enver was debating what course to adopt, it got to Hamid's ears that he was promoting another conspiracy against the life of the Sultan.

Abdul Hamid lost no time in acting, and on the strength of the advice tendered to him he ordered the arrest of Enver Bey. Enver, however, had been warned of his impending fate by none other than Baron von

Marschall himself, who evidently believed it wise to have friends everywhere. Enver Bey evaded arrest, but the road to further dignities and honour was thereby closed. He was dismissed his regiment and condemned to death. Such treatment was bitterly resented by Enver Bey as no reason for the degradation was given, and he never learned that his downfall was through the false accusation of conspiracy conveyed through Amina to the Sultan. He thereafter nourished in his heart a slumbering feeling of vindictive animosity which only needed the opportunity to burst forth into active operation against his Sovereign. From his retreat in Asia Minor he plotted with friends in Constantinople, of whom he had plenty, to enter into a real conspiracy against Abdul Hamid, whom it was at first intended to put to death without further ceremony.

I know personally, however, that Baron von Marschall, who had been kept faithfully informed of all that was going on, demurred to this. The life of the Sultan was to be spared, and on no account was he to be molested beyond the fact of his deposition. The orders of the Emperor William were precise as to this point, and only on that condition the Baron consented to furnish the conspirators with the money they required to put into execution their intentions. He was quite willing to dispossess Abdul Hamid of his throne, but he did not intend to lose him as an important trump in the game which he knew his master was playing.

The revolution took place, but not before Amina had been secretly warned to put aside whatever objects of

value, such as money and jewels, which she possessed, all of which were taken for safety to the German Embassy.

The great mistake made by Abdul Hamid, and to which ultimately he owed his fall, was that he failed to perceive that Eastern cunning could not succeed for ever. He had become so unpopular in his own country and among his own subjects that he could no longer hope to hold his crown unless he resorted to some help from outside, and by his own shiftiness he had dammed the sources. With all his unmistakable political abilities he was but an Oriental despot. Unfortunately for him, the nation over which he ruled was tired of despots, though it might have felt contented under an absolute sovereign such as is referred to in the Koran and whom Islam had worshipped in past ages. Abdul had imagined that in order to consolidate his position he must inspire terror; but, instead of terror, he only secured the hatred and contempt of his people.

His nature was a curious mixture of boldness of mind and conception, and fear at some unknown and dreadful fate which he ever felt was hovering over him and his race. Avaricious to an extent that has not been sufficiently appreciated, he hastened, as soon as he was warned by Baron Marschall von Bieberstein that a conspiracy was being hatched against him, to put in a place of safety as much as he could of the treasures and money he had amassed, and to this day in two German banks considerable sums are lying to his credit about which few of those he trusts have any idea and which his enemies

have so far failed to discover. It is a curiously illuminating insight into Eastern fatalism that he never thought of providing for his own safety beyond the precautions he generally employed. Except that he never slept two consecutive nights in the same room, he changed none of his usual habits. He had been advised to fly to some place where he could be better guarded than was possible at Yildiz, but he had always refused.

Sultan Abdul Hamid was cunning. He was not unaware of the bribery and corruption which permeated official spheres, but in the secrecy of his heart he felt that on his own part he was not free from reproach in that respect. He remembered occasions when, for this or that concession, he too had accepted baksheesh, and a few millions had found their way into his pocket rather than into the coffers of the State.

When the fall came and he was imprisoned at Salonika, the fact that he was so rich and that it was essential to lay hold of his well-concealed wealth assuredly preserved his life; otherwise he would have been killed as soon as he was taken prisoner. As it was, Abdul Hamid continued to snap his fingers at the revolutionaries who had robbed him of his throne. For years he kept them on tenterhooks, doling out small bribes of a few thousands at a time, and never revealing the place where he had hidden his many millions. In addition to the two Berlin banks, he confided specie to an enormous amount to the keeping of the Emperor William II., who suggested the idea to him. The German Emperor holds the

strings of Abdul Hamid's private purse; at any rate he did so till the war broke out, the interest on the money entrusted to his care going regularly to the ex-Sultan, though no one has ever been able to discover the channel through which the operation is transacted.

When the Young Turks made him prisoner, he did not offer the slightest resistance, but from his prison at Salonika, in spite of the rigorous way in which he was watched, he succeeded in maintaining communication with the outside world, notably with Berlin, and he followed with the utmost interest all that went on at Constantinople. He did not envy his successor; on the contrary, he remained upon good terms with him, as soon as he had realised that in time, if, indeed, he did not regain the throne which he had lost, he might at least be allowed to return to one of his palaces on the Bosphorus, there to spend the rest of his days in the leisurely fashion so dear to Eastern hearts. He had no regret for the supreme power which he had lost. Indeed, he is possibly happier to-day than at any time during the years when millions of people trembled at his approach.

A new Sultan was elected, about whom I shall have something to say later. He was a weak, timid man, kind-hearted, but without any will of his own. He was demoralised by years of semi-captivity, in which his best faculties had been smothered under the continual fear of assassination at the hands of his brother, who bore him a deep hatred. He felt more than surprised at his unexpected elevation to the throne and absolutely unable

to fight against the will of those who had brought him there.

Under his reign Turkish politics, which had been controlled by the iron hand of Abdul Hamid, were left to the guidance of men without experience and without policy. It was not surprising, therefore, that the administration allowed itself to be brought under German influence, and became dependent on the will of the Emperor William II., until at last the treaty of alliance which he had long tried without success to bring about became an accomplished fact. Turkey then suddenly came forward as an important factor in a most serious situation. Where Marshal von der Goltz had failed, General Liman von Sanders was to succeed most brilliantly.

On occasion, since his return to his former capital, Abdul Hamid has given unasked advice to Mohammed V., the following of which Mehmed has never had cause to regret. It is said that Abdul had a good deal to do with the recent attitude adopted by the Turkish Government and with the declaration of war against the Allies. However that may be, it is more than certain that the rash act was strongly reminiscent of the German sympathies of Abdul Hamid. In his retreat of Beylerbey he sees more visitors than he is supposed to do, and I have been told that the Khedive Abbas Hilmi more than once appealed to his experience and sought advice from him.

After having feigned illness and melancholy during the years which he spent in confinement at Salonika, he suddenly seemed to gather new strength, and it is said

by some people that he now prepares himself for the possibility of having once more a powerful voice in the destinies of Europe. Aged though he is, he has lost none of his former activity of mind. The old fox secretly amuses himself by watching the drama which he has helped to prepare, but for which he has contrived to avoid any responsibility. Whilst sipping his cup of coffee he remembers the past without remorse, and looks forward to the future with that perfect tranquillity which only a saint or a confirmed criminal can feel.

CHAPTER II

LIFE IN CONSTANTINOPLE

MY first visit to the Near East was with the intention of seeing something of Asia Minor as well as of Constantinople.

My first destination was Smyrna, but I was so entirely interested in the people of Constantinople that I did little else than remain in the city, studying its ways and learning a little—exceedingly little—of the intricate, not to say tortuous, mind of the Moslem. It is true I managed to make a short excursion to Brusa, but, apart from this, the rest of the month at my disposal I spent in the capital of the Turkish Empire.

I had been given considerable information about the Perotes—the native inhabitants of the European quarter of Pera—and had always been told that they exhibited a curious mingling of the habits of the Oriental with those of the European middle class. There is a certain amount of truth in this, but the description conveys to the mind of the stranger only a very weak picture of their curious and heterogeneous character.

It is one of the unwritten laws of Pera, which are as unalterable as the dicta of the Medes and Persians,

that everybody must know everybody else. One is not even allowed to acquire that knowledge gradually, but within an hour of one's arrival the new-comer is expected to get into contact with all who consider themselves to be the "right people." This expression "right people" is one of the most frequently used phrases in Constantinople, and it is used with such lavishness that, nine times out of ten, it gets beyond the sublime and becomes ridiculous. For instance, a certain butcher belongs to the "right people," yet there are Pashas against whom you brush daily who can lay no claim to that distinction, notwithstanding the fact that their breasts are covered with orders and that they occupy in the military or civil hierarchy a very high place indeed.

The Perotes, a name for which, by the way, they manifest an inordinate pride, are mostly half-castes, a mixture of Greek and Armenian blood, sprinkled here and there with descendants of more Western Europeans. Perote ladies may be amusing, especially by their utter disregard of conventionality, but they are not entertaining. Their education is slender, and their conversation a mixture of slander combined with coarseness. They seldom read anything except French novels of a very low order, and newspapers of a similar grade, of which many exist throughout Turkey. They are perennially eager for knowledge as to the actions, thoughts, and general movements of the Turkish ladies whom they know and of the foreigners who happen to come to gossip-loving Constantinople. The most reserved soon find, to their

intense surprise and disgust, that secrecy is impossible in Pera; plans or intentions somehow become known to perfect strangers with incredible swiftness; privacy is beyond attainment. "Society" in the capital of Turkey is merely another name for petty espionage; one cannot go out of doors without being watched by a dozen people, who at once start speculating why one turned to the left when it would have been just as easy to go to the right. The progress of every steam or motor launch that plies on the Bosphorus is known, not so much by its particular shape as by its distinguishing whistle, at the sound of which people rush to their windows to watch with eagerness and curiosity the boat's course.

In Perote-land every new arrival is subjected to a curiosity which reaches a magnitude those who have not experienced it steadfastly refuse to believe. For instance, when I put in an appearance for the first time at the ball which takes place at the Grand Hotel of Therapia every Saturday, I was immediately pounced upon by a lady afflicted with two daughters, each of whom was just as much a character as her mother. She started questioning me at once as to my reasons for visiting the Turkish capital. When I tried to assure her that I had been simply actuated by the desire to travel, and at the same time to visit friends at the German Embassy, she smiled in a mysterious way, and murmured, "Oh! You are discreet, like all gentlemen, but *we* know better. We have heard all about it." And when I attempted to assure her that there was nothing to hear about, she half-closed

her eyes, and murmured, "It is no use your trying to be mysterious; we all know that you have already been at Mrs. A.'s house, and," she added in a hushed, tragic tone, "we also know that you are a friend, an *old* friend, of hers!"

I was aghast. The lady referred to was the wife of a colleague of mine, lately married. I had never seen the lady before my arrival at Constantinople, when her husband had introduced me to her. But when I tried to convey this information to my tormentor, she simply looked at me, and replied, "Oh, it is useless, believe me, quite useless, to deny what we all know so well. It is, of course, very nice of you, but then you cannot control your face, and it lights up whenever you look at Mrs. A.!"

This last phrase proved too much for my outraged feelings, and I fled hastily, seeking refuge by the side of the very friend with whose wife I had been accused of carrying on an intrigue. I asked him whether it was a usual occurrence in Constantinople society thus to be submitted to inquisition as to one's past life. He laughed and told me that I would see and hear far more marvellous things before I had done with the delights of the Turkish capital.

And I did see them, and very quickly came to the conclusion that Constantinople was a very nice place not to live in. I would have drowned myself in despair had I been obliged to spend anything like a long time in it. At least, I thought so; but soon a curious, indolent,

satisfied feeling took me in its embrace. I began to understand the charms of an existence spent in idling among the roses and under the plane trees which give such a pleasant coolness to that wonderful spot. The general feeling of uneasiness which I had experienced passed away; I became used to the people, to their peculiarities, and to their utter disregard of what we call the conventions. I began also to understand something of the dreamy nature of the Orientals, and of that indifference of the Turk for everything that does not concern him personally, as well as his utter contempt of everything that is European.

The wives and womenfolk of the Diplomatic Corps keep themselves very exclusive; they do not care to mix with the Perotes. With the exception of some bankers of high repute, Perotes are not admitted to entertainments at the embassies. I speak of the ladies, of course. The men, however, of the Diplomatic Corps, especially the bachelors, do not refuse to make excursions into that particular world where one speaks such remarkable French and where Mrs. Grundy is unknown. Balls are given at Pera during the winter which are magnificent and sumptuous affairs, and sometimes it happens that politics come to be discussed at them, especially when some Pasha or Minister honours the event with his presence, and meets by accident—or more often design—some foreign ambassador bidden to the function.

It was during one of these festivities, given at the house of a wealthy Armenian, that the deposition of

Abdul Hamid was finally decided upon. At another, the Bulgarian Minister whispered into the ear of his French colleague that great things were about to happen, and that very likely a few months more would see a Christian Emperor enter St. Sophia, and the Mohammedan monarch who was at that moment reigning in Constantinople ousted from his high place.

Life in Turkey is always interesting, even in its moments of supreme idleness. One finds continually something to see and something to observe or to admire, and to any student of human nature it affords sources of enjoyment such as he meets with nowhere else in the world. For one thing, it is so totally different from what one sees generally, and it is intermingled with so many remembrances of a great and warlike past, that it cannot fail to produce a deep impression. Everything in the Ottoman Empire speaks about dead glories and buried heroes; of romances and love affairs intermingled with crime and murder, with women's tears and men's vengeances.

In Constantinople, a walk round the old walls erected by Justinian takes one back to those days when Byzantium kept the world chained to her chariot. The slender, white minarets which rise at every corner, and meet the eye wherever one turns, are full of sweet and dreadful memories; they rise up on the clear horizon of Stamboul as if to defy any conqueror to touch or to attempt to destroy their soft, sad beauty.

In this landscape, different from any other where

cypress and myrtle abound, and where the roses bloom all the year round, one comes to look at things, as well as at men, in quite a different light. The Western European, used to brisk views of life, and energetic days, is not long a dweller on the banks of the Bosphorus ere he ceases to wonder at the indifference with which the Turk looks on at the slow dismemberment of the mighty Islamic Empire. In Turkey nothing matters but the life of the day.

What struck me very much in this first sojourn in Constantinople was the attitude maintained by Turkish officials in regard to the social life of the European colony. One saw them sometimes solemnly attending the receptions given at the different embassies, and eating in stolid silence the dinners offered them by the influential people of Pera. They spoke but little, and even the mightiest among the many mighty Pashas who honoured these entertainments with their presence made a point of appearing to ignore French or other languages, and of maintaining a studious silence as far as they could.

I felt curious to know the reason for this restraint on the part of people whom I had had occasion to meet privately, and so knew that they spoke English or French or even German with a certain fluency. I was told that it proceeded from fear of spies, who were expected to report all that they heard to the Sultan. This fear, imposed upon high Turkish functionaries by anxiety as to their personal welfare, had a restraining influence also on the gossip, and I have noticed that whenever a Turk

happened to be in a Pera drawing-room conversation became less personal and more charitable.

Intrigue permeated the very atmosphere in Constantinople. In a land where most things were to be bought or sold, it is little wonder if strenuous efforts were made to snatch from the resources of the Empire every benefit that lay within reach. Everybody believed Turkey to be doomed to almost immediate dissolution; hence all hastened to seize the spoil. A relentless battle of wits was fought over every possible concession which could bring money to the lucky being who obtained it. Jewish bankers, French financiers, German capitalists, English engineers, Russian speculators were to be met at every turn. They filled the air with their vivid stories of the blessings which would accrue to the Turkish Empire if only its rulers consented to adopt one or other of the wild schemes which they unfolded before the eyes of those on whose permission their realisation depended.

Baksheesh was the king before whom every head bowed, and baksheesh was far more respected than was the Sultan himself. I have often heard someone say, "Does he know how to give a baksheesh?" just in the same tone which we would have employed had we asked, "Have you found So-and-so at home?"

Is it to be wondered at, therefore, if morality in Turkey seems so lax? Is it surprising that at the period of which I am writing no one in Europe believed that the Ottoman Empire was capable of an effort strong enough to raise itself from the slough of despond into which it

had fallen, and that those who arrived on the Bosphorus indulged in avaricious dreams as to the ultimate fate of this beautiful region, for the possession of which so many ambitions had been fighting for centuries?

That it could baffle all these intrigues, and assert itself once more as an independent power, no one credited save the Emperor William II., who alone had the foresight—or, maybe, wiliness—to work out this deed of regeneration, and to discover in weak, tottering Turkey an ally which, as he believed, when trained by German officers, was capable of fulfilling the important part that, thanks to untoward events, it was suddenly called upon to play.

CHAPTER III

SULTAN MOHAMMED V

MY duties in connection with the embassy to which I was attached took me afar. I left Constantinople for a considerable time, returned again for a few months' stay in the latter half of 1908 and the opening months of the following year, and after another long interval found myself, for the third time, entrusted with a mission to Stamboul, during 1913, in the closing days of the Balkan wars.

To my astonishment Turkey was a changed country. It had become appreciably more civilised, though in social life it had changed but little. The ladies in Pera still gossiped, shady financiers were still trying to obtain impossible concessions capable of taking in naïve European shareholders; but the fabric of the nation itself had vastly improved. A certain spirit of independence had replaced the abject submission prevalent during the reign of Abdul Hamid; varying political parties had sprung into existence, and were each struggling for notoriety and predominance; a certain freedom of thought had established itself. The Turks seemed to me to have awakened to the knowledge that it was not too late to

make an effort to become once more a factor in European politics. The sense of inferiority which had pursued them ever since the days of Count Ignatieff, of San Stefano fame, had died out.

It is undeniable that, in a powerful degree, this rejuvenation was due to the exertions of the Young Turk party, and especially to the personality of Enver Bey (more recently a Pasha). He was the man of the hour. He had succeeded, some months earlier, in absorbing the public attention to an extent no Turkish statesman had ever done before. He was no politician, but simply a man with high, though hardly great, ambitions, who had spent some long time in Germany, and there had won for himself the warm regard of the Emperor William II., who quickly discerned how useful a unit in his vast designs Enver could be. Enver knew this well enough, but preserved a characteristic impassivity, and meantime accorded to the new Sultan an outward humility and deference which cleverly concealed his inner feeling of utter contempt for Abdul Hamid's successor.

To tell the truth, the very appearance of Mohammed V.—Mehmed Réchad Khan—the present ruler of the Ottoman Empire, suggests nonentity. Small and bent, with sunken eye and deeply lined face, an obesity savouring of disease, and a yellow, oily complexion, he certainly is not prepossessing. There is little of intelligence in his countenance, and he has never lost a hunted, frightened look as he surveys his surroundings, as if

dreading to find an assassin lurking in some dark corner ready to strike and kill.

From the time of his birth to a few days before his accession, Mehmed had been kept in a state of semi-confinement, and subjected to most careful surveillance, in case he should attempt something that would endanger the safety of his reigning brother.

Abdul Hamid hated him and despised him at the same time. He yet felt afraid to have him killed—perhaps because he imagined that a stronger and more ambitious man would take his place. Mehmed Réchad, although he was reported to be at the head of the conspiracy which overthrew the former Sultan, was in reality absolutely unaware it was in progress, for the simple reason that no one would have dared to trust him with a secret of such importance. The only time that plotters had tried to persuade him to head a movement of reform in the country, he had been so terrified at the mere idea that he hastened to acquaint Abdul Hamid with all details of the intrigue.

During Abdul's tenure of the throne, Mehmed had been the object of cruel ill-treatment and the most unjust suspicions on the part of his brother. There was a time when he hardly dared to show himself in the streets of Constantinople. He never went to bed without wondering what might befall him during the night, and he carefully affected the mannerisms of an idiot in order to allay any apprehensions entertained as to his possible activity in political matters.

Mehmed Réchad had received a better education than Abdul Hamid, and had been taught European languages, but he had not profited by the lessons which had been given to him, preferring to spend his time in his harem, whence he seldom emerged. Looking at him, one could not understand how it was possible that this timid little man was able to boast of an ancestry as determined as it had been illustrious.

With all these defects, Mehmed Réchad was yet a patriot in his way. He felt vaguely that Turkey was in dire straits, but though he never imagined he could regenerate his country, yet he did not oppose those who attempted the task. He would have preferred above everything that someone should succeed in rousing the Ottoman Empire, one who would be content to leave to Mehmed the credit and the profit resulting from the enterprise. He understood his personal shortcomings, but felt, nevertheless, comfortable in their possession. He certainly would have been entirely sorry to reform either his position, his character, his moral outlook, or anything in his way of life. He was proud, too, in his way: proud of his people, perhaps even more than of his rank or of his riches, or of the power he was supposed to wield from the day he put on the sword of Osman at the Mosque of Eyoub.

When the messengers came to tell him that he was Sultan, he at first refused to believe it; his next thought was one of extreme solicitude as to the fate of his brother, respecting whom he kept asking for news and for assur-

Abdul Hamid of Turkey

Mohammed V. of Turkey

ances as to his safety. It is even reported that before Abdul Hamid had been taken away from Constantinople, Mehmed Réchad had been to see him secretly, and had begged his pardon for having usurped his place, assuring him that it had not been his fault that this had occurred. To this, it seems, wise and cunning Abdul Hamid had replied that his day was not over yet, and that the time would come when his brother and successor would be only too glad to have the benefit of his advice.

It seems that when the Council of Ministers heard about the visit, they censured Mehmed Réchad severely for taking such a step; they even threatened him with removal and imprisonment, which sent him into a state of panic.

Had Réchad been left to himself, he would probably have refused the diadem of Islam, but the iron will of one of his sisters, the lovely Médiha Sultane, proved too strong for him. This Turkish Princess was one of the first women in Constantinople to adopt European ways and manners, and to preach female emancipation to her sisters in faith and in misfortune. Married when quite young to one Damad Nedjib Pasha, she drank to the dregs the cup of humiliation which every Turkish girl is compelled to taste when she becomes wedded to a man she has never seen before her wedding day.

Damad Nedjib was ambitious, and had imagined that his marriage with a sister of the Padishah would ensure him honours and dignities. But the shrewd Abdul Hamid knew him very well, and appreciated him still better.

He had given him his sister in order to win him over, but he did not hasten to give Damad Nedjib the important place to which he considered himself entitled. Disappointed in his ambitions, Damad started out to thwart the Sultan with a recklessness that would certainly have ended in trouble with anyone else than Abdul Hamid, who was far too clever to show his irritation. He managed, instead, to have it conveyed to his brother-in-law that the only bar to his progress was his wife, who, according to the insidious whisperer, was doing her utmost to put obstacles in his way.

Damad Nedjib believed this tale of his wife's hate and intrigue, and, rumour says, ill-treated her barbarously. Her friends were indignant, she was furious. Not many weeks later, after having drunk a cup of coffee, her husband fell ill and died. She did not mourn him long, and in a few months married the man who had been in possession of her affections for a considerable time.

Damad Férid Pasha Bouchati, her second husband, was of Greek origin. He had rather advanced ideas as to the social standing of women, due doubtless to his travels in many lands. Médiha Sultane opened her doors to friends, and started a vigorous propaganda for female emancipation. The great influence of her husband supported the movement, which has lately become prominent in Turkey.

For some years Médiha Sultane was a leader in Constantinople, until at last the Sultan began to entertain suspicions that his sister's popularity had awakened within

her ambitions which were inimical to his future. The result was that Abdul Hamid, who was never a man to stick at trifles, sought a plan to rid himself of his too progressive sister. Baron von Marschall came to hear of Abdul's designs, and sought to thwart the plot, and—being in Constantinople at that time; it was my second visit—it became part of my duty to aid in bringing the counter-plot to successful issue. Mine was not a part in the limelight; nevertheless it carried a sufficient measure of responsibility to enable me to be fully conversant with the details of this "episode of Knight Marschall, squire of dames," as it was facetiously called by one of the conspirators.

Unfortunately for the Sultan, the affair happened at a moment when Berlin had begun to get tired of the shifty policy of the Sublime Porte. William II. was decidedly piqued that more attention was not paid by Abdul Hamid to the advice which had been showered upon him from Wilhelmstrasse. The Sultan was not at all responsive to the suggestions of the German Emperor, and was getting on his nerves more than a little. At the same time the Young Turks were daily growing in power, and seemed likely any day to become the leaders of the Ottoman Empire—an alliance with them would be easy, and von Marschall was persuaded in his own mind that it would profit Germany to take such a step.

Accordingly, he cultivated an acquaintance with Damad Férid Pasha that soon ripened into an intimacy, and at last gained for him an introduction to the beautiful

Princess Médiha. He used his opportunities to acquaint her of the dangers which threatened. She received the news with a calmness which proved that she at least knew her brother's nature; but it roused her Oriental love of intrigue and revenge, and she readily fell in with a suggestion which in reality was the first step in the development of the conspiracy which was to deprive Abdul Hamid of his throne and of his liberty.

It has always been my opinion, and I mention it in passing, that the present Sultan would never have countenanced the plot had it not been for the influence of his sister. She it was who, on that dreadful April night when the palace revolution put an end to a reign that had been as bloody as it had been evil, sat beside Mehmed Réchad, using all her powers to bolster his courage as, shaking with terror, he reclined on his cushions and wondered what kind of death he was destined to meet in a few moments. When the conspirators forced their way into his rooms, it was Médiha who inspired him to receive their salute as the Sovereign and the Commander of all the Faithful. Without her it is not improbable that the revolution would never have taken place, or, at least, that it would not have put the present Sultan on the throne.

It took Mehmed Réchad some time to become familiarised with his new position. Whenever a stranger asked to be introduced into his presence, or whenever he found himself obliged to appear at any public ceremony, he displayed extreme nervousness. The habits formed during his many years in bondage, the ever-present sense

of imminent danger engendered by the knowledge that his life depended upon the suspicion or caprice of his brother, remained with him for a long time after his elevation to the supreme dignity. If the truth were told, Réchad in his heart neither coveted the throne nor was grateful to his sister or her accomplices for their part in foisting it upon him.

At first he tried to do what he was told, but gradually the desire to assert himself possessed him, and he began to interest himself in the affairs of his vast Empire. Though no soldier, he understood how necessary was a strong army for his country. He listened, therefore, with far more concentration than he was credited with being capable of, to the sustained advice from Berlin to agree to the resumption of the German military mission for the purpose of training Turkish soldiers according to German methods and discipline. The result was that, when matters settled down after the revolution of 1908, von der Goltz, with a score or so of German officers, continued his work of reorganisation, until events led to his recall.

Although earlier, when the Balkan war broke out, Réchad had been heard to express his regret that the military education of his troops was not yet completed, their measure of efficiency was sufficient to cause him, when the opportunity arose after the first reverses of the campaign, to express the opinion that it was worth while trying to regain possession of Adrianople whilst the Bulgarians and the Serbs were fighting each other. Obedient

in some things to the will of his advisers, especially of Enver Bey—latterly transformed into Enver Pasha—he showed his independence in questions where the safety of the Empire was concerned. He had remained silent at the assassination of his Grand Vizier, but he refused to be quiet when the question was raised as to whether the conditions of the treaty which gave up to Bulgaria the possession of Adrianople should or should not be adhered to. He showed himself quite resolute, and with a determination no one could have expected to find in his weak nature, he not only accepted the suggestions of Enver to begin another war with the foes who had beaten him a few weeks before, but went so far as to review the regiments about to start for the front, and in a neat little speech to encourage them to win back for Islam the shrines from which they had been driven by the hated Christians.

At the same time he started looking around for alliances that would be of use to him in strengthening his hold upon the advantages he did not doubt for a moment he was about to win. It must be remembered that Baron von Marschall was no longer there to give advice to the Sultan. He had been appointed to succeed Count Metternich in London, in May, 1912, and after three months had died, his place being taken at the Court of St. James by Prince Lichnowsky. The Baron's successor at Constantinople had not yet won the confidence of Mehmed Réchad, who in that difficult moment turned once more to his sister, the one person in whom

he could have absolute confidence, and whom he knew would not betray him, for the simple reason that if she did so her own life would be in jeopardy.

Médiha Sultane was equal to the occasion. She told her brother that the only sensible thing which he could do was to follow up the suggestions from Berlin by writing personally to the German Emperor, asking him to send another military mission to Constantinople to complete the education of the Turkish army begun under Field-Marshal von der Goltz.

William II. hastened to reply that he was only too willing to help his good brother, and that he had appointed General Liman von Sanders, who would start forthwith for Constantinople. The Emperor added his opinion that the general, being more conciliatory in disposition than his predecessor, would understand better the peculiarities of the Turkish character, and in consequence prove a more successful instructor.

It was about that time that I was asked to go once more to the Turkish capital in order to judge for myself the position of things there. To tell the truth, I did not suspect the importance of the events that were hovering over our heads, and did not foresee the great catastrophe which was soon to overwhelm Europe, not excepting Turkey. I imagined that I was required to do no more than obtain some reliable estimate of the condition of things in Constantinople after the war which had just come to an end.

It turned out that that was only part—and the minor

part—of my mission, and that I had been chosen because of my known habit of observation. Although no direct instruction had been given yet, as I had seen Mehmed Réchad in the earliest days of his reign, it was evidently assumed with some confidence that during this visit my mind would be at work making comparisons between the state of things then and now, and also as to the directions in which the personality of Mehmed had shown most development. I arrived at this conclusion quite soon after my return from Stamboul, for I was interrogated with elaborate minuteness as to my impressions of the Sultan. I gave a fully detailed recital of what I had seen and heard, and what inferences I drew from the various little political intrigues going on around the Sultan, in which so many members of his family were compromised. I informed my superiors, further, that there were some, though their number was limited, who would not be sorry to see Abdul Hamid restored. Mehmed Réchad was considered to be weak in character, and therefore a source of danger to his country. On this particular point I was subjected, later, to a yet closer questioning, as, on a report being conveyed to an august personage, he had emphatically retorted that I was mistaken. His words were, I was told, "Mehmed is not weak, he only sees the weakness of his resources; quite a different thing, I assure you." But to return to the original cross-examination: I was asked whether it were true that when Abdul Hamid had been transferred from his Salonika villa to the Palace of Beylerbey, his

brother Mehmed had paid him a visit there, remaining in close conversation with him for a long time. I could only confirm the truth of the rumour, adding that when he came into the presence of his predecessor he was so moved that he bent down and kissed his hand, as he had been in the habit of doing when their positions were reversed.

Thereafter I began to give my impressions of the personality of Mehmed Réchad, and to compare it with that of Abdul Hamid. When I had finished the remark was made, "Perhaps it is just as well for Turkey that she has now a monarch inclined to follow other people's advice rather than his own will. We know where we are with the present Sultan, though this ought not to make us neglect Abdul Hamid; the moment may come when it will be more advantageous for German interest to re-establish Abdul Hamid on his throne than to preserve good relations with Mehmed Réchad."

Continuing, the principal of my interrogators concluded: "At all events, there is one person in Constantinople who will keep his importance for some time—Enver Pasha. That man holds the key of the whole situation; he is the man to watch in any moment of European complication. He can convert into concrete actions things about which Mehmed Réchad has only some nebulous feeling or wish that they might become realities. It is Enver Pasha who can complete the reorganisation of the Turkish army with the help of German officers; he, too, is the man to strike a blow at

the traditional enemy of the Ottoman Empire—ambitious Russia! And who knows whether this may not become necessary for Germany's existence as well as for the welfare of Turkey! Believe me, whatever Fate has in store, we shall not yet see the end of Islam."

CHAPTER IV

ENVER PASHA

IT is impossible to refer to Turkey without mentioning Enver Pasha. In recent years he has embodied the very soul of Islamic progress. Whatever may be the success of his policy, however much his methods may be open to criticism, he is the supremely interesting personality in Turkey.

By his energy and opportunism this young artillery officer, who a decade ago was comparatively if not completely unknown in international politics, has risen from the ranks to become chief of the war administration. Yet further, he has made himself of such political importance that the eyes of the whole Ottoman Empire are riveted upon him. His influence is far superior to the Sultan's, and his power not even the Sheikh-ul-Islam, that supreme authority of the Mohammedan world, cares to challenge.

I first knew Enver Pasha when he occupied the relatively modest post of Turkish military attaché in Berlin. In those days I thought him a serious, earnest young man, desirous of instructing himself, and one who was a most careful observer. I remember that one

evening, after some military manœuvres, we started a conversation that first touched on the events of the day, and later on drifted into a discussion as to the merits of the Turkish army. The young Moslem attaché became suddenly eloquent, and explained to me that few soldiers had been so maligned as the Turkish fighter. "People have become accustomed to despise us, too, as a nation," he said; "it is the fashion to speak of the Turks as being in the last stage of decay. They err; there are strong indications of future prosperity for my country."

"It is true," he continued, "that our government is abominable, but the moment another Sultan has replaced the tyrannic Abdul Hamid, everything will change. We are no longer an apathetic people. On the contrary, we have in our midst many men who have carefully studied social and political questions in Europe, and studied them with the intention of bringing their knowledge to bear upon the development of Turkey. Baksheesh, it is true, still flourishes; but, believe me, the moment Turks begin to govern their country in earnest, Parliament no longer will be the dead thing it is now, and the nation will have its say in all questions affecting its destinies. In that day baksheesh will cease to exist, at least in its present proportions."

Enver's words verged on the melodramatic, but the tone was full of quiet balance. He proceeded to justify, or rather to explain, the prevalence of bribery: "What gives it such an importance now is the number of adventurous foreigners who have invaded Turkey like so many

birds of prey. When they are cleared out things will change, and our people will be able to initiate a policy of moral expansion, which is all that it needs to be able to hold its own in Europe.

"Will you be surprised to hear that the army is far stronger than you foreigners think? The fanaticism which in ancient times made it perform such wonderful deeds is far from being dead; it only slumbers. Our men are still ready to give themselves for the sacred cause of Islam. What we require is generals capable of leading them. What we want is to be at liberty to act independently of the Great Powers. They imagine that they can control affairs on the Bosphorus, and so far have prevented us from contracting alliances capable of supporting our country against the pretensions of any who want to appropriate our territory before even we are vanquished. The moment that a man capable of taking our lead appears, and is courageous enough to laugh at those who would fain get rid of him, Turkey is saved. There will be a very real regret, perhaps, on the part of some of her present so-called friends if such a man is found, but I for one," he added, "firmly believe that he will be discovered one day."

"Perhaps he exists already," I remarked; "but what chance has he in the presence of an autocrat like Abdul Hamid, who will never admit any superiority beyond his own?"

"Abdul Hamid is not immortal," retorted Enver Bey, "and, besides, events may prove too strong for him,

too. Suppose, for instance, that Servia and Bulgaria were to declare war on us, he would find himself compelled to have confidence in someone; he could hardly lead his armies in the field personally. And then it would be the victorious general who had won the battle of Islam who would dictate, not only to the nation, but to the Sultan himself."

"Abdul Hamid would have him murdered at once," I retorted.

"It is not so easy to murder a general once he is secure in the affection of his troops," answered the young officer, "and military revolutions have been seen before to-day in Turkey. We still have troops eager to be led to victory and to be granted power. It will be with them that Abdul Hamid will have to count, and, tyrant though he be, he could hardly send to the gallows those who had saved his country and his throne from foreign aggression. Should he feel ever tempted to do so, then —then——" he paused one moment, and added very slowly, singular pathos vibrating in his words, "there are other members of our Imperial House able to take upon their shoulders the burden of the State."

I have quoted this conversation at length because it seems to me that it gives the note to the personality of Enver Pasha, and proves better than a formal character-sketch could do of what and how deeply he was thinking even then. But he kept his thoughts to himself, and nothing could have led those who knew him superficially to believe that he had within him the power to become

omnipotent in the land of his birth or even the qualities to carry through a military revolution.

I have since had serious reason to believe that Enver Bey discussed these matters with the German Emperor William II., with whom he had been in favour from his first arrival in Berlin. William II., who had failed in his efforts to make Abdul Hamid a will-less satellite of the German Empire, at once saw the possibilities that could arise out of a quiet but nevertheless palpable encouragement of the ambitious, dashing young officer, who, whilst studying the discipline of the Prussian army, was at the same time profiting by all that he saw, and was preparing himself for the part which his ambition and consciousness of ability persuaded him he could take in the conduct of affairs in his own country.

When Enver Bey left Berlin it was with a cordial letter of recommendation from the Emperor to Baron Marschall von Bieberstein, who in his turn was not slow to recognise Enver Bey's remarkable individuality and to make a close friend of him. The intimacy lasted until the Baron left Constantinople, some long time after the accession of Mehmed Réchad.

When Abdul Hamid was overthrown, and the question of his being put to death was seriously discussed, Enver Bey was the only one who supported the German Ambassador when the latter declared that under no condition whatever was the life of the Sultan to be threatened. The leader of the Young Turk party was clever enough to guess the immense advantage that, in

those first days of constitutional freedom, it would be to let it be known that he was strongly antagonistic to those who wanted to put the Sultan to death. His insight showed him that Abdul would be the more ready to do his bidding if he understood that Enver was averse to the drastic measure favoured by certain of the revolutionaries.

Gossip was very busy in Constantinople with the doings and sayings of Enver Bey for a long time, and his name came to be associated more than once with that of the beautiful Princess Médiha Sultane, who frequently had been heard to express herself in enthusiastic terms about him. Enver Bey was a handsome, fascinating man, well read, highly cultivated, and with wonderfully attractive manners. Notwithstanding the restrictions of harem life, he had made more than one feminine conquest in Stamboul. Fully aware that he was more feared and distrusted than liked by his comrades, the young officer tried to engage the sympathies of their wives, in the hope this course might prove useful to him in the future. He was not mistaken.

When Enver Bey put himself at the head of the conspiracy which aimed at the overthrow of Abdul Hamid, it was through the influence of the Princess Médiha that he was able to organise it. She visited the German Embassy when it was not prudent for Enver to be seen there. He knew that every movement he made was watched, and had to resort to many subterfuges in order to baffle the curiosity of spies; and this would not have been easy if

he had not been helped by the many intermediaries he had managed to secure among the fair sex.

When, some months after the first upheaval, Abdul Hamid had been deprived of his throne, it was thought that Enver Bey would at once become a personage of vastly greater importance—that honours and dignities would be showered upon him—nothing of the kind occurred. He remained a simple officer; and though his position in the army became stronger and stronger, he was not offered any substantial reward for his services by the new Sultan. Nor did he seek official recognition; his was a deeper ambition.

Enver Bey was aware, too, that Mehmed Réchad disliked him, and feared him not a little. The determination and imperiousness of Enver Bey always made timid little Réchad feel uncomfortable. He therefore tried to keep him as far as possible from his person, out of the dread, perhaps, that Enver Bey might be tempted to cause his overthrow as he had in the case of Abdul Hamid. He need have had no anxiety. Enver Bey had matters of much more personal importance to occupy him than the dethronement of the Sultan whom his fancy had put upon the throne.

Vast plans absorbed him; projects which went far into the future. Enver Bey wanted to reform the army, and to reawaken the martial spirit which had lain dormant during the reign of Abdul Hamid. He had faith in the worth of the Turkish soldier, and he was aware that Moslem fanaticism only needed the opportunity to

blaze forth anew. His frequent journeys abroad had made him very well aware of the dark designs nourished against Turkey by Bulgaria and Servia, and also of Russia's sympathy with Slav ideals in the Balkan Peninsula. He had had occasion to talk with shrewd Tsar Ferdinand of Bulgaria, and had learned of his aspirations to become a great and powerful Emperor and to enter the Cathedral of St. Sophia as the Christian Sovereign destined to restore that ancient shrine to the Christian faith. Enver Bey did not sympathise with the idea, and quietly determined to prevent its ever becoming a reality should he perceive signs of Ferdinand making a move toward the realisation of the dream. He did not wait even till activity was manifested in that direction, but immediately set to work to strengthen the military defence of Turkey.

When the Balkan War of 1912 broke out, and he found the Ottoman soldiers giving way before the Bulgars and Serbs, he thought it time to interfere. The Turks were yielding ground they should have defended to the last, and the precipitancy with which they accepted defeat scandalised him. He therefore decided to assert himself.

Curiously enough, just at this time certain Ministers who were not favourably disposed to the progressive methods of Enver Bey were attacked in broad daylight in one of the most frequented parts of Constantinople. I think some were killed; one was, at any rate, and another seriously injured.

Thereafter it became easier for Enver Bey to make felt the power of his influence, and in a very brief time

he became virtually the master of Turkey. His first efforts were in the direction of the army. Convinced that the peace signed at Bucharest would not be lasting, and suspecting that before long a European war was bound to break out, he wisely assumed that, properly utilised, such a war might prove the salvation of Turkey. Imbued with this idea, he worked without intermission at the reorganisation of the army. He allowed it to be bullied, punished, insulted even, by its Teutonic chiefs; but at the same time he kept dangling before its eyes the vision of a time when Islam would once more raise its head and re-establish itself in the proud position it once held in the eyes of the world.

Enver Bey had always cherished a grudge against Russia, and the more intently, therefore, he watched the developments of the crisis that culminated in the Great War which broke out in August, 1914. From his retreat on the banks of the Bosphorus, Enver Bey kept himself informed of what was going on in the world, and did not even attempt to hide his sympathies for the German cause. He sent secret messengers to Berlin with an offer of service to the Kaiser, declaring to him that the forces of Turkey were at his disposal, provided he gave his promise that the independence of that Empire would be respected. And when he saw that neither Russia nor England had taken him seriously, he resolutely crossed the Rubicon and declared on his own account, because none of his colleagues would follow him on such slippery ground, that he was going to fight side by side

with his Austrian and German friends until his beloved Turkey had been restored to her former splendours.

I have been asked sometimes what I thought would be the future of Enver Pasha. I can hardly bring myself to think that he will ever die in his bed like an ordinary mortal; the hatred which he has created and the aversion which he inspires precludes this possibility in such a country as Turkey. In the meantime, I feel that a man with such soaring ambitions would hardly find the consummation of his desire in the restoration of Turkey to its ancient greatness; he would not be human if he has not nursed in the silence of his soul the hope to be able to do more than stand at the head of that army he has contrived to rouse out of its apathy. I feel perfectly sure that Enver Pasha has not forgotten for an instant the vow of vengeance he registered on the day when the soldiers of the foe entered the sacred walls of Adrianople, and out of which he was to drive them with such energy.

The general feeling after the cessation of the Balkan wars was that Turkey would be occupied for many years to come in the rehabilitation and reorganisation of her fighting forces. And she certainly did enter into that work with zeal. But it was not to be for so long as people predicted, nor was the recuperative power of the Turkish hosts so feeble as was generally assumed. No one dreamed that in a comparatively few months Turkey could have sincerely believed that she had disciplined her army to the extent of making it fit to acquit itself well in another encounter. Nevertheless, this is what happened,

and, as the Russians found out, the first conflicts were not entirely to the disadvantage of the defenders of Islam. Enver Pasha had been a wise man in his generation; and while the world deluded itself with the thought that he was absorbed by innumerable palace intrigues, with secret cunning he had arranged for masses of troops to be trained by German officers forming part of the new mission headed by General Liman von Sanders in the plains of Asia Minor, where there was no one to tell the world of the rapid progress he felt convinced they would make. His hopes were not unrealised, and excellently well-instructed and well-equipped troops went forward to the Russian frontier.

Yet another question has been asked me by some—How far was the German Emperor cognisant of the military propaganda of Enver Pasha? It would be unfair to William II. to say that he was ignorant of the plans of Enver Pasha in this respect, or that either of them failed to foresee the value of military efficiency in the region of the Black Sea, where Russian strength of arms was not great, and facilities for the rapid transit of reinforcements on the Russian side inadequate to meet a sudden emergency. It would seem almost that the contingency had been very carefully catered for.

CHAPTER V

RUSSIAN INFLUENCE IN CONSTANTINOPLE

LONG before my first visit to Turkey I had been led to believe that all questions affecting the welfare of the Turkish Empire were substantially controlled from Petrograd, or Petersburg as it was then. So firmly rooted was the power wielded by Russia at the Sublime Porte that even the war of 1877 had been unable to shake its dominance, though the findings of the Berlin Congress certainly narrowed its range. How that influence waned and was latterly undermined is one of the object lessons of modern history. Another long-held belief was that the Christian communities in Pera, Galata and elsewhere, looked to the Tsar as their natural protector. In the eyes of the rival embassies, indeed, Russia was the bugbear that everyone seemed to dread and whom all decided it were wise to watch.

My astonishment was the greater, therefore, on arriving in Constantinople in 1888, to find that Russia was fast losing ground in Stamboul, and that the Christian population, though giving outward deference to the Romanoffs, looked far more hopefully toward Bulgaria as the defender of their interests, should anything

untoward happen. The days when the word of Ignatieff was law had vanished, and to all appearance there was little likelihood of their return.

At first I felt shy at these discoveries, and was reluctant to make even a distant allusion to them in conversing with officials of the different embassies or among my friends and acquaintances. I could not help noticing how much care was taken always to solicit and listen respectfully to the opinion of the Russian diplomats, and yet, too, with what unanimity no heed was taken of the advice tendered on financial and economic matters. I was not slow to observe, also, that whereas the invitations to the Russian Embassy were always accepted, apologies and regrets were sent at the last moment from an embarrassingly large proportion of those in diplomatic circles. There was significance in both circumstances.

During my roamings about the city in the first days of my stay I found myself in Pera, where the Greek community reigns supreme, and whence the majority of the revolutionary movements of the last quarter of a century have emanated. As my knowledge of these folk increased, and I made acquaintance with certain of their number, it was borne in upon my notice that the importance of Russia as a factor to count with, or upon, had dwindled almost to vanishing point. The Latin Church was under the wing of France, but the Greek Orthodox Church, which of old had always looked to Russia, was becoming more and more inclined to transfer her affections. After the war of the 'seventies Count Ignatieff

had not been sparing of his promises to conserve the rights of the Greek Christians, but as time went on they were forced to the realisation that their most precious interests were either overlooked or forgotten. Consequently Russia lost prestige, and gradually an estrangement set in. The leaders of the Greek Church in the Ottoman Empire began to lend ear to voices from Belgrade and Athens, and especially from Sofia, whence was whispered the possibility of securing through that channel their long-dreamed deliverance from the hamperings of the Turkish yoke.

Had Russia been wise after the peace of San Stefano she would have taken particular care that she was always represented at the Sublime Porte by men who thoroughly understood the situation and were sufficiently quick of perception and bold in initiative to divert the tide of religious feeling back into its old channels. Unfortunately she did not. Prince Lobanoff lacked energy; M. Zinovieff, though really a clever man, had little influence; M. Nelidoff was too old; and M. de Giers, who was in diplomatic charge at the time war was declared against the Allies in 1914, was not blessed either with rapid decision or abnormal foresight.

Greece and Bulgaria speedily took advantage of the laxity of Russian interest to advance their own cause among the Christians by lending a ready ear to the complaints against the Sublime Porte. Bulgaria especially was active in this propaganda. It had its own religious hierarchy, and Ferdinand aspired to be accredited as the

supreme protector of the Orthodox Christian Church in the Near East.

With this in view the priesthood had worked very cleverly to sap the old traditions by reason of which Russia had maintained a privileged position in the whole of the Levant, as the redresser of the wrongs, not only of her own people, but also of all the other non-Moslem religious communities in Constantinople. The friendliness of the Tsar Ferdinand and his mother, the late Princess Clementine of Coburg, toward the Jesuits who gathered in Bulgaria from the Austrian Roman Catholic communities, made much easier the underground work on the part of Bulgaria which characterised the last decade of the nineteenth century and the opening years of the twentieth.

This struggle of the Roman and Greek faiths became more intricate by the intervention of Greece. On the question of religious influence there was constant friction between Bulgaria and the Government at Athens, which fought for the extension of the privileges already enjoyed by the Greek Patriarch of Constantinople. Between the activities of these two rivals Russia began to lose prestige. She seemed, indeed, to be renouncing of her own free will her long-existing paternal interest in the Christian communities. Her indifference was more than short-sighted, because it would mean that any interest henceforward manifested by Russia on behalf of the Slav nationalities in the Balkan peninsula would be purely political in tinge, and as such subject to be contested by

the Balkan races themselves, who were quite willing to be amenable to the Tsar of Russia for their religious freedom, but who certainly would never allow their political movements to be directed by Nicholas II.—or anyone else than themselves.

I have dwelt at some length on this point because it is really the key to the modern situation. The principal object which justified the presence of Russia in the Near East was the protection which she had given from time immemorial to the Christian subjects of the Sultan. Having allowed her influence to wane, opportunity was afforded for all sorts of possibilities, and there were those who were not slow to perceive the trend of affairs. The Emperor William II. was early aware of the developing situation, and during his visit to the Sultan gathered the views of the leading members of the Christian communities of Constantinople. It did not escape his notice that their allegiance toward Russia was considerably shaken. The German Emperor never lost sight of that momentous circumstance, and when in later years events brought a closer intercourse with Ferdinand of Bulgaria, my reading of the chain of events is that William II. advised him to concentrate his energies upon the task of ousting Russia, thereby to clear the path for the attainment of Ferdinand's dearest wish—to be proclaimed Emperor of a Christian Turkey.

Ferdinand was only too willing to accept the hint, and immediately set to work to initiate with energy and success the policy which conceivably would have brought about

the realisation of his hopes, had it not been for the timely support given to Servia by Nicholas II. of Russia.

It is not generally known that when the second Balkan War broke out, between Bulgaria, Servia, and Greece, that Servia entered into a secret understanding with the Russian Government. The affair was negotiated by one of M. Pashitch's intimate friends, M. Guentchitch, a former Servian Minister, who spent the greater part of the summer of 1913 in Petersburg. This fact did not remain secret from Berlin, where it was recognised by William II. as a pronounced danger to his Near Eastern policy. To nullify the effectiveness of this agreement between Servia and Russia, the German Emperor lost no time in paving the way to a reconciliation between Ferdinand and Mohammed V., with the idea of convincing them that their mutual interests could best be served by annihilating Russian influence in regions of the Black Sea not within her own territory.

Baron von Wangenheim, who followed Baron Marschall von Bieberstein at the Sublime Porte, was at pains to ingratiate himself with the new Sultan and his advisers, nor did he omit to cultivate the goodwill of Abdul. All this resulted in furthering the aims of German diplomacy in Constantinople to the detriment of Russian influence.

During my last sojourn in Turkey, in the early part of 1913, I had occasion to call on M. de Giers, the Russian Ambassador. He very cordially invited me to dine with him, and over coffee we found ourselves discussing the burning questions of the day. My host evinced a supreme

confidence in the achievements of European diplomacy, by which not only had a general war been averted, but its likelihood banished for ever. M. de Giers was too optimistic. He committed the error of not looking beyond the moment, and while not devoid of a goodly share of natural intelligence, had nevertheless cultivated the habit of never venturing any decisive step upon his own responsibility.

Almost as soon as he arrived in Turkey he was credited to have made the remark that he would not allow himself to be inveigled into intrigue. His attitude rather emphasised that it was extremely probable such a declaration had fallen from his lips. The welcoming advances made by various of the Bulgarian leaders and by representative men of the Greek community were received most coldly, and altogether he conveyed the impression to the Sublime Porte that he considered he had no right to concern himself with questions affecting the internal administration of the Turkish Empire, and that the sole object of his presence was to keep on good terms with the Government to which he was accredited. To that end M. de Giers made much of his social duties. He had an excellent cook, entertained with lavish hospitality, and in his deportment was the essence of politeness.

So far as my own observation went, and from opinions expressed to me as I went about among the members of the various embassies, I felt satisfied that M. de Giers never gave serious thought to the possibility of a Prusso-Turkish alliance. It being part of my field of inquiry to

keep an alert eye on anything which tended to reveal the fluctuations of opinion respecting German influence, my senses became attuned, as it were, to a fine pitch of perception. As a consequence I generally found my conclusions were justified by events. Thus, when the Russian Ambassador opposed the appointment of General Liman von Sanders as the virtual head of the Turkish army, he most certainly did so more out of deference to his French colleague than from any conviction that the episode might mean anything which in the future could prove dangerous to his own country. He believed that Turkey was too weak ever to provoke a war with Russia, and that her army was too disorganised to give her any hope of holding her own. More than that, he was persuaded of the unbroken continuity and undiminished strength of the friendly feelings the Ottoman Government entertained for the Tsar. If there were any doubt on the subject, it was, to his mind, banished for ever by the fact that a special mission was sent by the Sultan to greet the Tsar on the last visit he made to Livadia in the Crimea. That, to him, was complete justification of his faith.

In the course of our evening together, on the occasion already referred to, M. de Giers frequently alluded to the topic of Moslem friendship, and seemed slightly surprised when, with the object of inducing him to reveal himself more fully, I expressed doubt.

"Why should Turkey *not* like us?" he asked. "We are her nearest neighbour, and we certainly do not desire the fall of the Ottoman Empire, nor even a diminution

of its power. We certainly are not delighted to see her have German instructors, but that has nothing to do with our sentiments for her on the broad plane. We also could send officers just as clever and as conscientious to train her troops."

"Pardon my emphasis," I replied, "but do you ever feel that there may arrive a moment when international complications might tempt Turkey to throw herself against you in the hope of getting back some of her lost provinces? In such a situation it would be very natural for Turkey to do so."

"Ah, yes," replied the ambassador; "yes, but you can take it from me no general complications *will* occur, at any rate not for a long time to come. A few months ago we were very near to war, but now I really do not see what could bring it about. I do not think that any monarch in Europe would dare to risk such an adventure. Do not you think, too, that the fevered armaments which are being multiplied on every hand are the best guarantee that we have entered into a period of long peace?"

"You may be right, of course," was my reply, "but have you thought that these very armaments may become an insufferable burden, and that one or other of the nations may feel compelled to declare war in order to prevent the financial strain such tremendous armaments involves making life intolerable to its peoples?"

M. de Giers looked at me with the expression of a veteran instructing a novice, a wealth of self-satisfaction modulating his voice.

"Ah! how one sees that you are not a diplomat by profession," he said. "No, believe me, we are in no danger of clouds obscuring the European sky; you may rest content on that point."

I refrained from disturbing the confiding ambassador's security, but wondered in the secret of my soul what made him so unobservant of the grave events that were taking place under his very eyes.

CHAPTER VI

GERMAN PRESTIGE IN THE NEAR EAST

ENOUGH has been told in earlier chapters to give insight into the activities and character of German diplomacy in the Near East. Russia's satisfaction in the preponderating reality of her own influence was Germany's opportunity, and, setting aside any discussion of ethical standards, it is to be doubted whether any diplomatist of any country would have refrained from taking advantage of the situation, to the benefit of his own nation at the expense of Russia.

As we have seen, Germany had always been vigilant and enterprising, and so was easily first in the field. While others were satisfied with themselves, Germany sought out means of making for herself a position in the Levant, and by using methods which appealed to Turkish minds she succeeded.

A considerable factor in the rapidity with which Teutonic influence gained ground was that the servants of the Fatherland set themselves to understand the intricacies of the Oriental mind, and so ordered their conduct that a minimum of friction arose. In this the Emperor William II. himself was not behind his minis-

ters. His study of the Turk enabled him to follow to perfection his mental and moral tortuousness. It also guided him in his demeanour toward the Moslem. Appreciating to a nicety how far the Turk is glamoured by display and grandiloquence, he adjusted the details of his memorable visits to different domains of Mohammedanism on the Mediterranean. Even the smallest incidents were carefully prepared in advance, with regard to the impressions the Emperor desired to make.

A notable instance was the pilgrimage of William II. to the Holy Land. When he arrived within sight of the walls of Jerusalem he asked to be shown the exact spot whence tradition holds that Godfrey de Bouillon obtained his first sight of the Holy City. It being pointed out, he stood for some time gazing on the sacred city, and then expressed a desire to erect a monument on the spot. "Because," he added, "it is fitting that a memorial to perpetuate the name of the first king of Jerusalem would be raised by the first German sovereign who had been able to walk in his footsteps."

The same Turkish dignitary, attached to the suite of the German Emperor, who told me this incident, also revealed a remarkable proposal William II. made when he paid reverence to the sanctity of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. As visitors know, a holy calm is by no means the prevailing atmosphere, and continual strife goes on within the sanctuary between the various religious communities. To the Emperor it savoured of something akin to sacrilege that the maintenance of order in the

most holy spot of Christendom should be in the hands of Mohammedans, and so he made the extraordinary inquiry of the pasha who was acting as cicerone whether he thought it would be possible to obtain from the Sultan the cession to Germany of the city of Jerusalem, including the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, in order that he might guard it against desecration. "It is not seemly that the tomb of Christ should be the scene of continual strife. If the Sultan would consent to make Germany the custodian of Jerusalem, all these painful incidents would cease. Were his desire fulfilled," was the argument, "tranquillity would be restored among the rival Christian guides who roam about the sacred precincts and quarrel over the plundering of tourists and pilgrims."

With such zeal did the German Emperor prosecute this new idea which had inflamed his mind that, despite the assurance of the pasha in question that the Sultan would never lend himself to such a scheme, William II. had the matter taken up by his Foreign Office. The impracticability of such a proposal being seriously put forward was so patent to the officials in Wilhelmstrasse that the Imperial suggestion was transmitted to the Sublime Porte in such language that the authorities accepted the hint and found no difficulty in returning a decided refusal couched in polite terms.

This policy of pomp was also seen in active operation when William II. went to Morocco. By his lavish display of the gorgeous trappings of royalty, his simulation of reverence for Mohammedan devotions, and his prodigal

distribution of baksheesh, he achieved a vociferous popularity among the Moors. He was certainly successful in producing the impression that he was a strong and powerful monarch. He showed himself extremely amiable to all with whom he came into contact. In the course of his tour he conversed with many Arabs and natives, particularly on the quality of their friendship toward France.

On the day he left the usual complimentary speeches were made. That of the German Emperor was felicitous, and it contained some portentous phrases which were not made public; they were rash words, lightly spoken, but capable of sinister construction by those not well disposed to the Emperor. He brought his little speech to a close with these words: "I am going home delighted with my visit, but I will not say good-bye. I will hope that soon I may be able to come back, no longer as a visitor, but as the ally of the great Turkish Sultan and as the best friend and protector of Islam."

Some such sentiment as this he also expressed at the conclusion of his tour in the Holy Land a few years earlier. The underlying spirit of these incidents is a consciousness of the value to Germany of Turkish friendship, or at any rate her complacency. William II. was convinced of the benefit his empire would derive, if certain potentialities developed, from an alliance with Turkey and Mohammedanism, and, whatever other nationalities may think of his actions, he was patriotic enough—sometimes to the point of unwisdom—to plan always for the future

in his acts and sayings. Looking backward over the years of his reign, every observant student of political evolution must discern the truth of this assertion. The German Emperor was not in close sympathy with either the Sultan of Turkey or the Sultan of Morocco, but his far sight recognised the value of Moslem friendship should ever Russia make a definite stand against the growth of German influence in the Balkans or become fearful of the undoubted dominance which Germany had secured in Turkish military administration. To have a Turkish fleet bombarding Odessa, or a Holy War proclaimed in the region of the Caucasus, would denude Russia of necessary troops for the western frontiers—and that would be a trump card.

This line of thought is admittedly in the realm of the unprovable, but its improbability was by no means so illusory. Indeed, it was well known in certain circles in Berlin that of recent years the German Emperor had the fixed idea that whereas there was no manifest reason why he should go to war with Russia, yet it was inevitable that at some time a conflict would be participated, and that the contingency was not made more remote by the existence of the Franco-Russian entente. In the financial circles of Berlin such a conviction was strongly held, and inclined leading financiers to listen with favour to schemes and concessions involving large monetary speculations in Turkish regions, but promising exceedingly rich rewards to German trade and industry.

The Turkish upheaval, which culminated in the

deposition of Abdul Hamid, did not interfere with German designs; indeed, the accession of Mehmed Réchad and the rise to power of Enver Pasha were circumstances which tended to establish on a still firmer basis German influence in Turkey. As the world knows, German prestige suffered a temporary eclipse three or four years ago, but far less harm than is generally imagined was done to German influence, which is very different from prestige. It occasioned little surprise, therefore, to those who knew how the current was running under the surface that, when war broke out between Turkey and her Slav neighbours, Enver Bey, as he was then, requested William II. to permit a number of German officers to take active part in the conflict. They were allowed to do so, and their efforts followed with close interest. When Adrianople fell, it is public knowledge that the German Emperor telegraphed his regrets to the Sultan. What is not known outside a narrow circle of higher political agents is that the royal telegram also included the following astonishing sentiment:

"I do not despair that within a very short time the ancient shrine of Islam will be again in the possession of Your Majesty, and Your Majesty may rest assured that I shall do all that lies within my power in order that it should be so."

To explain that the telegram was in cipher is unnecessary.

During the discussion of the treaty of peace the

German Ambassador in London received strict instructions to insist upon Adrianople remaining in the possession of the Turks, and after the war which broke out and automatically settled the vexed question, William II. secured—some say compelled—the acceptance of a new military mission. This mission had extraordinary powers, but it was not commanded by Field-Marshal von der Goltz. The Emperor was displeased with him. He may have felt that the lost prestige referred to a few sentences earlier was because von der Goltz had not been sufficiently diligent in furthering the cause of Germany.

Be that as it may, it was discovered that Marshal Liman von Sanders was entrusted with the mission. In Berlin it was said that von Sanders' farewell audience with the Emperor occupied considerably more time than usual. Gossip among a well-informed few went so far as to say that the gist of the conversation was the means whereby a definite alliance between Turkey and the Fatherland was to be brought about, and that the General went out to Turkey in the belief that such a consummation would benefit the Ottoman Empire to a far greater extent than Germany.

I knew Marshal Liman von Sanders. He was a most amiable man, full of quiet tact, with excellent manners, wide military knowledge, and a thorough understanding of the duties he felt himself called upon to perform. When he arrived in Turkey he set himself to work at once, and with sagacious diplomacy handled the delicate situation with considerable skill. He was well aware that

his was a perilous path—many Turks looked askance at him, and even those who warmly supported the idea of a German alliance were decidedly restive at the fate of the Turkish army being left so completely in his hands. His difficulties were accentuated by his inability to speak the Turkish language, and he did not know sufficient of his subordinates to feel quite happy in trusting them with his confidence. Nevertheless, with true Teutonic energy he applied himself to the tasks of overcoming the various obstacles and achieving a greater measure of success even than his predecessor had wrested from circumstance. In co-operation with Enver Bey he conceived the idea of training the troops away from the eyes of Constantinople, and accordingly conducted his operations in the remoteness of Asia Minor, where progress could not be watched and noted by interested observers. Here his assiduity was rewarded, and, so far as efficiency in drill and marksmanship are concerned, the standards of the German military system were maintained. How far in actual warfare the Mohammedan army would stand the test was then on the knees of the gods. One difficulty, however, was never overcome, and that was the latent hostility always felt by the Turkish troops at being commanded by "those Christian dogs."

In other directions than the organisation of the army Germany found scope for exercising her gift of perseverance. It is noteworthy that from the highest diplomatic official down to the humblest civil servant Berlin seldom erred in her selection. One and all were solicitous of the

progress of Germany, knew what was expected of them, and did their best to justify the confidence reposed in them.

It is little to be wondered that the consequence was that, while Russia declined in prestige, German influence daily grew more powerful. Constantinople was becoming persuaded of the greatness of Germany, of her paramount strength in the world, and, the greatest asset of all, of her fidelity to those whom she counted as friends. German trade and German industry gained considerably through that policy, and German manufactures ousted from the Turkish markets those of other countries. England maintained her lead, but showed exceedingly little increase in the volume of trade, while Germany progressed by leaps and bounds until, as compared with thirty years ago, her exports to Turkey showed more than a hundredfold increase. Great Britain suddenly awoke to a realisation of the fact that the bulk of the business arising out of the development of commercial facilities in Turkey was going in the direction of Germany, that the Teuton had taken for his own advantages that which the Englishman had become accustomed to consider exclusively his prerogative.

Not only in England but in other European countries a very real concern was exhibited at the vast expansion of German interests in the Near East, not so much at the capture of the trade, but at the circumstances which made it possible. Diplomats and consuls engaged themselves in fathoming the causes which had contributed to

the rapid and wide development, and out of these inquiries grew a friction which led to strategy and provocation in various directions. The uneasiness created was still agitating the various influences at work to secure lost ground, or to maintain the position gained, as the case might be, when the possibility of war began to be discussed.

It is true that Germany lost considerable prestige and England seemed to have scored a diplomatic victory during the last days of Baron von Marschall's reign at the German Embassy, but the circumstance only served to provide further stimulation to German efforts, and in ways known to themselves they were able ere long to emerge from the cloud as powerful as ever.

I am satisfied that this conviction of progress and energy and virility which German diplomats were able to convey to the minds of high Turkish officials was no small factor in bringing the Sublime Porte to the decision that they were safe in making with Germany an alliance not less real because not officially ratified in the eyes of Europe. To the Turk the Germans were the masters of the West, a belief strengthened by the prodigality with which Berlin poured gold into the lap of Turkey.

An intercepted document which came into my keeping in 1914 I have before me at this very moment. It is in the handwriting of one who was on terms of close friendship with William I., but who has never approved of the ethical ideas of the old Emperor's grandson. This long indictment of German overtures in the Near East,

for such it is, vouched that the great reason of the Sublime Porte being willing to listen to German proposals was that only Germany had raised no difficulty whenever Turkey wanted money. The Ottoman Empire had nearly exhausted any credit she had in France and England, or other European countries, and her negotiations with America had not been crowned with success. Germany proved the solitary exception, and purses were opened to Turkey with an alacrity which ought to have made her suspicious of what lurked behind such apparently disinterested friendship and generosity. Unfortunately, Turkish statesmen were unable to see this. Maybe they feigned blindness, for there are those who say that no matter what amount of solid cash the Sublime Porte receives, half of it goes into private pockets. Whatever the reason, the fact remains that Turkey complacently allowed the net to be woven round her. In this way, the document states, the German Emperor prepared his ground for an easy assent on the part of Turkey to a definite alliance. His foresight had enabled him to plan for such an issue long before it was generally recognised how acute the Balkan situation might become. When, therefore, Europe awoke to the danger a mid-European conflagration might prove to the greater nations, Germany had already strongly entrenched herself in the friendship of Turkey, and so gained for herself a position which would materially benefit her dispositions should she become involved in a conflict.

More than that transpired from the narrative unfolded

in the document from which I have been quoting. What follows is of vital moment, as it refers to a period immediately before the war. The writer flatly charges William II. with a determination to bring about a rupture. The German Emperor was apprehensive that Russia would not make good her support of Servia, and therefore sent a confidential messenger to "suggest to Tsar Ferdinand at Sofia that, in case of a conciliatory attitude being adopted by the Russian Government, he would find it to his advantage to invade Servian territory."

I have given the exact words just as they were set down. "These overtures," the document proceeds, "were received in a friendly spirit, but Ferdinand declared that circumstances forced him to an extreme reserve. In the face of public opinion in Bulgaria, it would be impossible for him to follow out the suggestion; but, should any 'Servian insolence' be demonstrated, Bulgarians would certainly back up any firm attitude he chose to adopt. In any case," the Tsar of Bulgaria is purported to have said, "I cannot prophesy what is going to happen, but the question of the neutrality of Bulgaria need not be raised until the precipitation of a conflict makes the matter of interest to Europe. And even then it will not need discussing till later stages are reached; at such a period our neutrality may be more than a pawn in the game."

To come back to matters within my personal knowledge, I was in Berlin when, a short time before the war,

Enver Pasha paid a flying visit to Wilhelmstrasse. I spent an hour with him before he left again for Constantinople. He seemed unusually bright and happy, in brisk spirits, and expecting great things for his country in the immediate future.

For some time, he told me, secret emissaries of Turkey had been working on the feelings of the Mohammedan population of the Caucasus, doing their best to destroy every feeling of respect for Russia. In Batoum, he said, speaking with greater freedom doubtless from his knowledge that I was a political agent, arms and ammunition had been distributed to the natives. It was certain, too, that the inhabitants of the Black Sea littoral had been won over, and only awaited the opportunity to declare themselves in favour of the Turkish cause; while the Armenians, aggrieved at Russia's neglect, would not lift a little finger to save her. "Russia," added Enver Pasha, "has lost the sympathies of every Slav nation in the Balkans except Montenegro and Servia." Continuing, "At present," he said, "Turkey is strongly enthusiastic over Germany."

When Enver Pasha left Berlin at the conclusion of his secret visit, I took him to the station. I had grown to like the young officer, notwithstanding his many failings and soaring ambitions. He told me he had had a long talk with the Emperor, and he seemed particularly cheerful in consequence. More than once I have wondered what bearing that talk had upon subsequent events on the Bosphorus. Undoubtedly, with such a man as

Enver Pasha, the situation in the Near East would have been uppermost, and he would be quite unlikely to have neglected the opportunity of a frank conversation with the Emperor William. Indeed, it seems to me that the visit to the German Emperor was more in the nature of a prearranged consultation than a fugitive opportunity avidly seized. My curiosity was yet further excited when I received by the same mail which announced that Turkey had joined in the war a note in the handwriting of Enver Pasha, containing few but trenchant words: "The hour has struck. May Allah help us."

CHAPTER VII

AMBASSADORS AT THE SUBLIME PORTE

A POLITICAL agent enjoys more freedom than does a diplomat. There is less restraint, and, if he is not averse to the small change of social gossip, he finds life full of variety. Without conceit I can say that, when the call of service led me afar, on my return to Constantinople I found that I had not been forgotten during the years of my absence. The purpose of these remarks is not, however, to emphasise my own popularity, but to justify the statement that I was the recipient of many a whispered drawing-room confidence, which, added to my own knowledge and observation, has afforded sufficient ground work for giving some outline of the personalities of the various diplomatic figures who have held office in Constantinople.

More than ordinary interest attached to the embassies in Constantinople because the political atmosphere was always charged with possibilities which relieved diplomatic life on the Bosphorus from any suspicion of monotony. It was the aim, therefore, of ambitious young men to become associated with the embassy of their particular nation for the sake of the experience to be gained in the

conduct of modern state politics. This, and the fact that the fashionable resorts near the Turkish capital were altogether delightful during the summer months, and in consequence attracted many notable people, made Constantinople a point of observation of unusual interest.

For a considerable period Baron von Radowitz represented Germany at the Sublime Porte. He was a charming man, bright in manner, and clever in matters of diplomacy. Although old Prince Gortschakov always asserted that the Baron was a muddler, nevertheless von Radowitz managed to do substantial work for his country. It is undoubted that Baron von Radowitz laid the foundations upon which, later, was built the close friendship between William II. and Sultan Abdul Hamid. This achievement was the more remarkable inasmuch as previously the relations between Germany and Turkey had been cool. The student of history will need no telling that Prince Bismarck never kept secret the profound contempt he felt for the Turk, and this feeling was shared and expressed throughout Germany. Nor was the Sublime Porte ignorant of the fact.

When William ascended the throne and initiated his policy of cultivating the friendship of Turkey, his ambassador found ample scope for the exercise of his diplomatic gifts. It was certain no "muddler" could hope to succeed. Incidentally, he had a tremendously hard time of it at first. Von der Goltz, it is true, had been at work with the army, but that as yet was no great influence, and the Turks were quite willing to accept

favours without extending a reciprocal friendship. In spite of all, and in the face of the added difficulty that he had to perform his task without raising suspicion that it was in progress, Baron von Radowitz contrived to impress upon the Turk that he, at least, held kindly feelings toward them. From this first step, by assiduous cultivation of the right people, he was able to bring the Sublime Porte to consider that Germany was a friend worth having, and that he himself was finding some measure of success in his indefatigable efforts to eradicate from the minds of his colleagues at Wilhelmstrasse the "false impression"—the Baron's own delightful euphemism—which, much to his regret, had hitherto prevailed. If for nothing else, the service von Radowitz rendered to his country by turning the mind of the Turk toward Germany gives his name high place on the scroll of diplomatic fame. Had he failed, who knows what may have been the relations between the two countries to-day? When William II. made his triumphal journey to Constantinople in 1889, it was a triumph also for the Baron.

Some measure of the popularity enjoyed by Baron von Radowitz was owing to his wife. She was a Russian by birth, and an unusually charming woman. Together the Baron and his wife made the German Embassy a centre of social enjoyment, for von Radowitz himself was a perfect host, accomplished, entertaining, and a delightful raconteur. To the humour of his anecdotes was added the spice of truth, for he was an observant man and saw many happenings which others allowed to go unnoticed.

Gossip said that he possessed that attribute commonly credited to diplomats, and good-humouredly accepted by them almost as a delicate compliment—a penchant for unscrupulousness. More tangible gifts were his extreme shrewdness, his lightning adaptability, his urbane wiliness, and an admirable knowledge of human nature. He used these qualities with considerable discernment and singular tact, and during his tenure of office, at a period of exceptional difficulty, did splendid service for his Emperor.

Yet for all that he felt the heavy hand of William II. when he ventured to suggest that certain features in a policy he was instructed to pursue in regard to Servia and Bulgaria were unwise. It was of no avail that his knowledge of affairs in the Balkan peninsula gave weight to his opinions; as speedily as the thunder crash follows the flash of lightning, his remonstrance was answered by instruction to take up an appointment at Madrid. This unexpected and unforeseen transference was looked upon as a sign of displeasure, as the ambassadorial post at Madrid was considered to involve much less responsibility than at Constantinople.

These events took place between my first and my second visits to the Bosphorus. M. Radowitz left Constantinople in 1892, and in 1897 another notable diplomat, my friend Baron Marschall von Bieberstein, was appointed in succession to Baron Saurma de Jeltsch.

Baron von Marschall had the advantage of coming to Constantinople direct from ministerial duties in Berlin, in the course of which, particularly at the Foreign Office,

he had attained to a wide knowledge of the undercurrents of German policy in regard to the Near East. This was an unquestionable asset, and all through his diplomatic service at the Sublime Porte he was guided and helped by the fact that he knew much of the inner workings of Balkan state affairs and the measure of German influence exerted in the various countries of the group. In this way he was able to realise that the future of Turkey was in danger of being compromised by the intrigues of the smaller states along her borders and in the Balkan area. He was also in a favoured position when he arrived at Constantinople to checkmate, or at any rate counteract, these secret movements, and he was not slow in beginning operations. The Baron was not long in office at the embassy ere he discovered that the diplomats of other countries, not excepting Russia, though not entirely unaware of the way the tide was flowing, were ignorant of the strength of the current and of the potentialities of the situation.

As earlier chapters have shown, Bieberstein was energetic in stemming the tide by quietly setting to work to strengthen Turkey. It was only natural, and perfectly legitimate diplomacy, that he should make capital out of his efforts by keeping the Sultan and high officials in Turkey in a continual state of acknowledgment of their obligations to Germany for thus befriending her. From that step to the definite exercise of influence directed to the establishment of German control in certain departments of state administration was not a superhuman

task for a diplomat of such capabilities and resource as Baron von Marschall. What Radowitz began, Bieberstein brought to fruition.

At the time the Baron took office he found Austria waiting the chance to annex Bosnia and Herzegovina from the Sultan of Turkey, and moreover was casting longing eyes toward Servia, to the detriment of the Obrenovitch dynasty. His particular fear so far as Servia was concerned was that were Austria to gain her ambition in that quarter it would only prove a further menace to Turkey, which was unthinkable. Circumstances combined to defeat Baron von Marschall, and Bosnia and Herzegovina became part of Austria-Hungary. I have heard it whispered that the Baron was not so inconsolable as might have been expected from his early championing of Turkey's cause against Austria, the reason being the passing of certain suggestions from Berlin as to the modified attitude to be observed in regard to the affairs of the Emperor Francis Joseph. Be that as it may, it seemed good policy to impress upon the nations of the Near East that Turkey had found a loyal friend in Germany, and was likely, therefore, to take on a new lease of life. The effect was soon observed in Turkey's renewed prestige, and the feeling that Germany was behind the scenes while Turkey was in the limelight threw cold water on the unhealthy ambition of Ferdinand, who was then a prince of Bulgaria yearning for a kingdom of his own. When Bulgaria declared its independence in 1908, and Ferdinand found his ambition realised, he did

not forget his dislike of Baron von Bieberstein, and this feeling has tinctured Ferdinand's feelings in relation to Germany, toward whom he has preserved an elusive attitude of fulsome promise of decisions always to be made in the future.

Much to the delight of Bieberstein, the feeling of uncertainty as to the exact value of Ferdinand's promises and the nature of his real intentions was shared by William II., who in those days exhibited a lukewarm tolerance for Ferdinand. It can hardly be described in warmer phrases, and even when the Archduke Franz Ferdinand, who was fond of his cousin Ferdinand, did his best to bring about a better understanding between Ferdinand and William II., the effort did not succeed. All this byplay of circumstance was so much gained for the plans of von Marschall, whose ambition was to bring Turkey into the Triple Alliance. The forces which he hoped would bring about such a consummation were twofold. First, Turkey's acceptance of Germany's emphatic protestations of disinterested friendship, and, secondly, Turkey's fear of her neighbours.

Baron von Bieberstein's efforts to further German interests in Turkey need no recounting; they were so far successful that he brought within measurable range of signing a treaty of alliance between the two empires. From his advent in 1897 all von Marschall's energies had been directed toward securing a dominant voice in Turkish affairs, and it was a bitter disappointment that the crowning triumph of an alliance under clauses framed

at Wilhelmstrasse was frustrated by the obstinacy of Abdul Hamid, who at the last minute refused to bind himself by anything more tangible than his verbal assurance of support in the event of a war breaking out in the West. When the astute diplomat was thus frustrated, he sought to encompass his aim through the instrumentality of Enver Bey, whose star was in the ascendant—but that is a story already told.

Baron Marschall von Bieberstein was a big man, broad shouldered, rugged, and kindly in appearance. He was a clever talker, and had the rare quality of jovial enthusiasm in his social enjoyments. In conversation he was apt to indulge in humour of a satirical tinge, but was broad minded in his views, and possessed of a quick intuition which made him extraordinarily adaptable. When he was appointed to London in the summer of 1912 it was felt that he honestly deserved the reward of such an exalted position. And when he died, a few brief months after his appointment, even his enemies, of whom he made many during his forceful career at the Berlin Foreign Office, conceded that a great man had passed away.

I learned with sincere gratification of the appointment of Baron von Wangenheim to the embassy at Constantinople. He is a personal friend of mine. The Emperor's choice was a particularly happy one. He is as tactful and enterprising as his predecessor had been, and quick at seizing opportunities which would prove beneficial to his country. During the Balkan crisis his conduct was

prudent in the extreme, and even in the moments of greatest tension he contrived both to keep cool and to mask his real opinions.

Baron von Wangenheim was a whole-souled believer in the *Welt-politik* of Emperor William II., and was firmly convinced that the Germans were God's own people. It was under his reign at the embassy that the secret compact which Baron von Marschall had so nearly brought about was finally entered into.* The achievement gave considerable satisfaction among those who viewed with trepidation the loosening of the ties of the Triple Alliance upon "treacherous Italy," as the third party to the 1887 treaty was freely called at that time.

Of other diplomats whom I met during my visits to Constantinople, Margrave Pallavicini, the representative from 1906 of our ally Austria, finds foremost place. He was a member of the Hungarian branch of that illustrious family and the embodiment of polished courtliness. He became popular almost as soon as he took up residence at Pera, his dignity and affability making his society much sought after. He tried to put at ease all who spoke to him, but was a past master in the art of politely extinguishing any venturesome person who attempted to take a liberty. At times his ways have a suspicion of pomposity, which is invariably forgiven—because he is exceedingly rich. His diplomatic labours are characterised

* Notwithstanding the absence of official sanction, the intent of the compact can be looked upon in no other light than that of a verbally agreed Alliance. At Wilhelm-strasse that was the status given to the affair.

by strong common sense, and he is an ambassador with principles.

I met M. Louis Bompard only on my last visit, though he had represented France at the Sublime Porte from 1909. Previously he had held the diplomatic office at Petersburg, a fact which was of considerable use to him in watching developments at Constantinople. When he came to the embassy the work of overshadowing Russian by German influence was wellnigh completed, but he found scope for his energies and much that interested him. Though probably few would have called him brilliant, M. Bompard was undeniably clever and possessed a singularly keen quality of penetration. I believe he discerned more of the real situation, and what were the real factors producing it, than many a one who had been on the spot for years. He freely condemned European interference, and was particularly disdainful of what he liked to call "Harem intrigues." And because he held himself aloof from every kind of intrigue, he gained the sincere respect of the pashas and other officers who were the private advisers of the Sultan.

Mehmed Réchad had been three months on the throne when M. Bompard arrived in Berlin, which meant that the French ambassador missed the revolution. He was not sorry to leave Petersburg, where he paid the social penalty of following an exceedingly rich ambassador who entertained lavishly and who was of high birth. Nevertheless, he was staunch and unwavering in his sympathies for Russia as a nation, and did the best he could to act in

harmony with the Tsar's representative on all the grave and important questions that arose during his sojourn in Turkey.

Although personally, as a political agent seeking ever to further the interests of my own country, I could do nothing but rejoice at the outcome, I often felt that M. Bompard was hampered, and secretly vexed, at the want of appreciation with which his Russian colleague met his efforts. More than once when the Frenchman proposed some joint representation which he felt it necessary for their common interests that they should make to the Sublime Porte, he found M. de Giers unwilling to do so. Not from any unfriendliness, but from what was more galling still to M. Bompard, a refusal to recognise any need to disturb the contentment which—because it seemed so on the surface—the Russian ambassador was satisfied really prevailed. M. de Giers was far too optimistic for his French colleague's peace of mind.

Before I understood the personality of M. Bompard I ventured to ask his opinion of the future development of Turkey, and what part she would play in the event of trouble ever arising between the Triple Alliance and the triple understanding. The incident took place in the spring of 1913, about a week after I had arrived in Constantinople. We found ourselves smoking cigarettes together whilst we looked out over the Bosphorus after a dinner to which a society hostess had invited us. I did not attempt the experiment again. The diplomat's manner warned me it might be dangerous. His clear,

serious eyes seemed to read one through, and he gave one the impression of having immediately divined the underlying motive for putting a leading question. I have been told, and I quite believe it, that when the European crisis arose, M. Bompard very nearly persuaded the Ottoman Government to remain neutral. Such an eventuality would have destroyed the years of patient fostering of German interest and influence. Yet, notwithstanding all, at one moment it seemed imminent that Turkey would forget all that Germany had done for her and in the face of well-defined moral obligations have remained passive at a moment when her adherence to all the protestation of friendship she had made was vital. M. Bompard did not succeed. By expedients familiar to German diplomacy, Baron von Wangenheim turned the scales in favour of his country.

I did not see much of Sir Louis Mallet, the representative of King George V. He had a great name for cleverness and boasted of considerable political experience, besides being a very amiable, pleasant, and agreeable man. He had the reputation, too, of being a keen observer. The German Emperor, I am aware, hated him, because, having had occasion to see Sir Louis in London, Sir Louis had been rude to him in the way of showing too plainly to William II. how very little value he placed on the protestations of friendship for England which the German sovereign boasted.

Among other diplomats with whom I became acquainted at Constantinople, the Italian ambassador,

the Marquis Garroni, was a perfect type. Though he occupied a post which was most important in view of the different questions still being discussed between Italy and Turkey, he did not seem to worry much about them, and took life most easily, which perhaps was the best thing he could do under the circumstances. I did not care much for him, and, besides, I had been warned in Berlin not to allow myself to be drawn into an intimacy with him, and especially recommended not to allow him to guess that the question of a German-Turkish alliance was or had ever been in question.

Perhaps the only ambassador who could boast of perfect knowledge of Eastern life and Eastern politics was the Dutch minister, Dr. van der Does de Villebois, who, thanks to his long sojourn in Egypt, which had preceded his appointment in Constantinople, had acquired an unrivalled experience that was to be envied concerning Oriental manners, customs, and intrigues.

CHAPTER VIII

THE SHEIKH-UL-ISLAM AND RELIGIOUS FANATICISM

CONTRARY to the general belief, Turks, as a rule, are not fanatics; they show themselves so tolerant in religious matters that, with advantage, their example might be followed by a good many Christians. Legends which represent them as thirsting for the blood of the infidel are just legends and nothing more. The last war which took place between Turkey and Servia and Bulgaria proved with evidence that both parties were fighting for political supremacy, and not for the faith which they professed. And as for the atrocities committed during its course, they were performed by all parties without exception. The Bulgarians, for instance, pillaged, and destroyed, and burned; they killed without discrimination, and showed themselves as ferocious as they were pitiless. More than once the victims which they left behind them wherever they went were picked up and cared for by the Turks, whom they had tried to represent as merciless in regard to the Christians.

In political matters the Turks are quite willing to live and let live, but they do not admit any encroachment on the traditions which in bygone times made them

great. They believe that an hour will come when the crescent shall once more rise triumphant in countries where of old it reigned supreme, and that the last day of Islam has not risen yet. They have a constant indignation at the servitude to which the followers of the prophet are condemned in Egypt, India, Central Asia, and French territory in Africa. This sentiment is genuine; they lament over it and weep over the degradation of their race and of their faith. In their religious fervour they have remained the same as of old; they are ever ready to respond to the call of those who know how to appeal to that trait in their character. The fate of their country might under certain circumstances have left them indifferent, whilst the danger of Islam will always succeed in rousing them either to great deeds or to strong actions.

Lately, and especially since the accession of the present Sultan, those feelings came rather to the front owing to the influence of the Sheikh-ul-Islam and the leaders of the dancing and howling dervishes of Constantinople. In order to consolidate his own position, Réchad felt himself compelled to stand up as the protector of all Moslems. The Emperor William, being made aware of this, had not neglected to wield influence in Constantinople through such channels. Unknown even to his own ambassadors, because it was only towards the end of his sojourn in Turkey that Baron von Marschall had become aware of it, he had entered into relations with the Sheikh-ul-Islam. He had even been in correspondence with the

sheikh of the howling dervishes, a personage of vast influence. The sheikh was a man already advanced in years, with a venerable countenance, whose austerity of life had brought him into great reputation among the poorer classes of Constantinople. At a sign thousands of people would follow him to the ends of the earth. A word uttered by him was sufficient to provoke or to appease a rebellion, and more than once his intervention had saved Abdul Hamid from the fate which only befell him because he had not sufficiently taken into account the importance of that leader of the religious party in Turkey, and had slighted him on several occasions. The sheikh was a most vindictive individual by nature, and he never forgot or forgave an injury. He had had occasion to ask Abdul Hamid to appoint one of his relatives as aide-de-camp to His Majesty. But Abdul did not care to have close to his person anyone belonging to the immediate surroundings of the sheikh, and refused the request in language of unnecessary violence. This was sufficient to set against him that august personage, and from that day his fate was sealed, and his deposition became a matter of time.

The Emperor, who had been kept informed as to the smallest details connected with this quarrel, thought it opportune to interfere. It was only then that Baron von Marschall was ordered to go and pay personally his respects to the sheikh, and to discuss together with him certain questions inimical to Abdul Hamid. In this way the Baron learned of what had long been in progress.

Clever as he was, he had not suspected the secret, nor did he at first grasp its inner meaning. But when von Marschall was told later on to use his endeavours to cultivate the friendship of the Khedive of Egypt, who used to spend part of the summer in Constantinople, he began to understand what lay at the root of these assurances of friendship which the German Emperor was so eager to have transmitted to these people, whom he had never seen in his life, but whose co-operation he was so anxious to secure.

Another powerful personage was the Sheikh-ul-Islam. Essad Effendi, who then occupied that important position, was domineering by nature, but he had great intellectual faculties, a keen taste for intrigue, and the wish to be consulted in every important political decision in which the interests of his country were concerned. He believed himself to be a leader of men, which he certainly was by virtue of the great religious power which he wielded. He disliked Abdul Hamid, more for the latter's cruelties than from any personal feeling, whilst he had always nursed a certain amount of pity for the miserable, persecuted Mehmed Réchad. It is not surprising, therefore, that he entered with alacrity into the conspiracy which aimed at dispossessing the Sultan of his crown. Essad Effendi was generally liked, and even had few enemies. His ambition was enormous, and he did not make a secret of the fact that he aspired to be the instrument by which Moslems would at last be reunited under the sceptre of the Commander of the Faithful.

It is not generaly known that it was the Sheikh-ul-Islam who made overtures of friendship to the German Emperor, and not vice versa. He had been excessively impressed by the personality of William II., and by the pomp which had attended his famous visit to Abdul Hamid. Essad Effendi, who was not Sheikh-ul-Islam at that time, formed a good idea of the strength of Turkey's new friend. He saw at once that with the exercise of a little diplomacy he might secure for himself, as well as for his country, the promise that, whatever happened later on, neither he nor they would be forsaken by the Protestant monarch whose protection they had succeeded in winning.

Essad Effendi, ever since the outbreak of the first Balkan war, had worked upon the mind of the Sultan and done his best to make Réchad enter into the spirit of the Mohammedan crusade which he preached. It was partly through his intervention that, when hostilities broke out between Germany and Russia, the Turkish Government ceased to keep secret its hostility in regard to the Russians. He played upon the ambition of Mehmed Réchad, and tried to inspire him with the desire to deliver his persecuted brothers and proclaim himself as head of a vast Moslem state which should include all Mohammedans in the world. Under the glamour of this influence the spirit of the Egyptian Mahdi began to stir in Essad's bosom. He dreamt of a day when he would be able to restore Egypt to its former position, and, being practical to an uncommon degree, quite appreciated the

advantage it would be to him to gain possession also of the Suez Canal.

In the early days of the war, therefore, the Sultan, helped by the advice of the sheikh of the dervishes and of Essad Effendi, determined to make full use of this wonderful opportunity which was given to him so unexpectedly, and forthwith started to proclaim the Holy War against the infidels, causing to be displayed the green flag of the Prophet, an event almost unprecedented in the history of Turkey in modern times.

The call was responded to with enthusiasm, and from all parts of Asia Minor and the Arabian Desert men came pouring in, eager to join the army that was being assembled to fight against the unbelievers.

William II. rejoiced to find that his cherished hopes were on the way to fulfilment, and that if Italy abandoned him, Turkey would prove faithful. He knew that he had been suspected of intriguing at Constantinople against the Tsar and against Russian influence, and it had always angered him to hear people making allusion to that fact, because he had always the fear that the example of Abdul Hamid might be imitated by his brother and successor, and that at the crucial moment the latter would hesitate to plunge his country into such an adventure. He must, therefore, have rejoiced considerably when at last Mehmed Réchad decided to unfold the sacred banner of Islam against Orthodox Russia.

It is a curious trick of circumstance that we behold the strange spectacle of Protestant Prussia fighting

together with Moslem hosts against Catholic France, Buddhist Japan, Orthodox Greek Russia, and Christian England. Amidst the many wonders of an age of wonders it is one of the most interesting, and also, perhaps, one of the most dangerous, omens to the future peace of the world.

CHAPTER IX

KHEDIVE ABBAS HILMI

IN an earlier chapter I made a passing reference to the relations between Sultan Abdul Hamid and the young Khedive of Egypt. On my first Eastern visit I had occasion to go to Egypt from Constantinople, and there learned many interesting things. I knew earlier that as soon as he ascended the throne William II. did his best to cultivate the friendship of Moslem Egypt. Tewfik Pasha was still alive at that time, and he did not respond to the advances of Germany with as much readiness as might have been supposed or expected. He was a very shrewd man in spite of his apparent heaviness, and he was moreover entirely convinced that English influence and English interests were best for his country and himself. He realised that any attempt to throw off the English yoke would have the direst consequences. He therefore cultivated a spirit of absolute agreement with Lord Cromer, who at that time filled with much distinction the delicate functions of English Agent-General in Egypt.

Lord Cromer appreciated the deference of the Khedive, and at the same time was very well aware of

the considerable support Tewfik Pasha could give against the intrigues of the so-called French party which aspired at the time to gain the upper hand in questions concerning the interior administration of Egypt. This course on the part of Lord Cromer was well advised, as the French party was secretly supported by no less a personage than the famous Nubar Pasha, who was Prime Minister during the greater part of the reign of Tewfik. Under these conditions the advances of the young German Emperor encountered considerable coolness, and when he caused tentative inquiries to be made of certain members of the Egyptian native administration as to the degree of welcome a visit of his in Cairo would receive, the idea was met with distinct disapproval.

Tewfik sought the advice of Lord Cromer, who found it easy to explain that it would be to the advantage of no one if the German engineers, who would undoubtedly have accompanied William II., could have the opportunity to examine in detail all the improvements which England had in progress in order to facilitate the development of agriculture in that country, and the different measures of safety which had been adopted to preserve the integrity of the Suez Canal. The Emperor was therefore given most respectfully and most courteously to understand that his arrival in Egypt would not be considered opportune, and the honour of his presence there was therefore declined with abundant thanks.

This was all explained to me in a spirit of malicious glee by an effendi who knew my nationality, and hoped

to have the satisfaction of watching my discomfiture. I flatter myself that I successfully concealed my emotions.

The incident was not without its value to me, as I was able to report to Berlin the underlying fears which had dictated the polite refusal. Later I was told that the knowledge did not please Emperor William, who felt the affront very keenly. I would not do more than make the statement with all reserve, but I was definitely informed that the German Emperor has hated Lord Cromer ever since, and the hatred went so far that he actually inspired, and in one or two instances corrected with his own hand, newspaper articles in which the great English pro-consul was bitterly maligned.

Concurrently with the permeation of Turkish official circles with German influence, attempts were made to secure the sympathies of several people in Egypt who viewed with dissatisfaction the progress of English influence. In due course, even among the Khedive's immediate surroundings, champions were secured who began to insinuate to Tewfik that after all he was allowed to play but little part in the government of his own country. This was followed by the suggestion that if he would but let friends in other directions help him, he might wield far greater power and adopt a political course unfettered by English control.

Among these people was the Countess S——, for something like half a century one of the most important personages in Cairo society. A Russian by birth, married to an Italian, she was a clever, intriguing woman who

had ingratiated herself in the good graces of the Khedivah, or Vice Reine, and so obtained free access to the Khedivial harem. The Countess could be influenced in whatever direction the inducement was most tangible, and, strange to say, though a subject of the Tsar by birth, she acquired strong German sympathies. She became the stoutest supporter of the German Emperor's policy in the East.

Whether in the long run the Countess would have been allowed to continue her German intrigues remains a question, but she discovered that certain who were necessary to her success would not allow themselves to be deluded by her sophistry or tempted by her promises. Foremost among her declared enemies was a cousin of the Khedive, Princess Nazli, a remarkable woman, still charming, though long past middle age, who had been one of the first champions of female emancipation in Turkey. In Egypt she partly succeeded in breaking down the barriers. Except for the fact that she wore a *yashmak* and a *feridgi* when she went out, the Princess adopted entirely the life of a European lady of rank, even to the length of receiving masculine visitors in her palace, without a veil hiding her features. She was devoted to England and everything English, and exceedingly fond of both Lord and Lady Cromer, who were frequent guests at her ancient Moorish palace in the old quarters of Cairo. The Princess used to keep them very well posted as to all the different intrigues that were continually going on amidst the surroundings of the weak and kind-hearted Khedive.

She possessed a certain influence over her cousin, the Khedive, who, though secretly afraid of her, yet recognised her great and unmistakable qualities. Whether that influence would have been durable is a problem which remains unsolved, because Tewfik Pasha died quite suddenly and unexpectedly, leaving his throne to a young boy. This lad had been bred in the atmosphere of his mother's harem, under the control of his mother's friends; he was strongly independent by nature, but as limited in insight as he was in experience.

When Abbas Hilmi became Khedive he at once proclaimed himself the protector of the independent rights of Egypt, and made no secret of his dislike of everything English. From the very outset he showed slavish deference toward the Sultan. He flattered Abdul Hamid and succeeded in ingratiating himself in his good graces. This was no difficult matter, as the astute Abdul Hamid saw at once the use which he could make of the headstrong youth who, from the very first instant that he had succeeded his father, applied himself to defy England. Unfortunately, in order to do that with a chance of success it would have required a stronger man than Abbas Hilmi, who in the end had his pride humbled, first by Lord Cromer, then by Sir Eldon Gorst, and lastly by the next Agent, Lord Kitchener. From the moment of Lord Kitchener's appointment the prestige of Abbas Hilmi began to decrease almost hourly, until at last he came to be considered even by his own subjects as an automaton.

Hussein Kemal
SULTAN OF EGYPT

Abbas Hilmi
THE EX-KHEDIVE

This state of affairs was admittedly prejudicial to German interests, but it would not be faithful to history to suppress the facts simply because they were uncongenial to my friends at Wilhelmstrasse. The realisation of the struggling forces in Egypt caused a more persistent effort to be put forth to strengthen German influence. When, some few years after Abbas Hilmi came to the throne, Baron von Bieberstein was appointed to Constantinople, he was enjoined to establish intimate relations with the Khedive. Abdul Hamid, after his deposition, was also induced to take Abbas under his protection. When Abdul Hamid was allowed to return to Constantinople, he aided Abbas Hilmi to a considerable extent out of private means which Abdul had given into the care of William II. But for that the extravagant Khedive would often have found himself financially embarrassed, because Lord Kitchener was inflexible in his refusal whenever he was appealed to for an increase to the civil list.

Abbas Hilmi could not fail to perceive the difference in the treatment accorded to him by England on the one hand and by Turkey on the other. He, too, had it continually impressed upon him that Germany was a sympathising friend, and that the Emperor William's kindliness had much to do with Abdul's generosity. By gentle steps the Khedive was led along the path of discontent until, at last, he was persuaded that he was justified in giving over to Wilhelmstrasse all the plans for the defence of the Suez Canal, which, unknown to Lord

Kitchener, he had appropriated to himself and brought over to Constantinople for safety.

Once this diplomatic feat was accomplished, it became possible for Berlin to move in the direction of extending her influence among the followers of Islam.

When the present war with Russia and with her allies broke out, I expected as a matter of course that Turkey would hasten to follow in the footsteps of Germany, and that the Egyptian question would be raised anew under conditions which would make it very hard for England to solve. Thanks to the care which Germany has given to the problem of the Suez Canal, it has been observed from all sides by innumerable German agents, and there are accomplices both at Suez and at Port Said ready at any moment to throw off the cloak.

In compliance with the wishes of the German Emperor, the secret efforts of German diplomacy and of the statesmen at Berlin have been directed toward one supreme aim—the wresting from England the possession of Egypt as the one controlling power over the Suez Canal. In Wilhelmstrasse they were confident that once the canal were destroyed—and I have good reasons to fear that should the question of its occupation become doubtful its total destruction has long ago been decided upon—England would find herself so entirely handicapped in her trade and her commerce that it would become relatively easy to annihilate her altogether, or at least to render her incapable either of resistance or of expansion for a long time to come.

The one difficulty which this plan presented was that of persuading Abbas Hilmi to accept it. The young Khedive was quite willing to do his best to reduce the power of England, but he did not intend in the least that his country should pass into the hands of another great Power, or of abdicating one iota of the independence he thought he could secure. He could not be brought to an entire trust in the good faith of the Emperor William. He did not trust the Sultan Mehmed Réchad either because he knew that he was but a tool in the hands of Enver Pasha, and that Enver Pasha would have given much to be elected Khedive of Egypt.

Out of this welter of intrigue it was forced upon me that the young Khedive, who had alienated himself from his real friends and played with those who professed goodwill for the sake of making a tool of him, was drawing to the conclusion that the day was approaching when he would fall between stools, as the English expression has it. The fact was that the removal of the young Khedive was felt to have become a necessity, even by those who were still making use of him. The German Emperor had grasped the untrustworthy character of his tool, and was perfectly aware that, after having played the English and Lord Kitchener false, Abbas Hilmi would never hold faith with him or keep the engagements into which he had entered simply in order to obtain money. The Sultan Réchad was worried by him and, besides, had been warned against him; Abdul Hamid was tired of the pepetual demands for money with which he was bothered; and

Enver Pasha considered him as the great obstacle between him and his conquest of the province which he coveted.

My own feeling on the matter of the Suez Canal is that its possession would not benefit Germany in the least, and that those in highest places in Berlin are blinded by feelings of mere covetousness and rivalry. On the contrary, I am satisfied it would be a bad day for the German Emperor if Fate gave the canal into his possession. It would add nothing to our prosperity or to our welfare. First, it would become the source of perpetual strifes and annoyances, as England would never resign herself to its loss; then France also would find in the appropriation of the great thoroughfare of the world by Germany a pretext for renewed attacks against her; Russia and Japan, who are interested in the commercial side of the question, would undoubtedly insist on the neutralisation of the canal. These seem to me to be some of the logical outcomes. The end of the matter might be the blowing up of the canal by Turkey, who would thus solve the question of its possession. No! Germany has muddled things in this direction, and, in my opinion, will have to pay bitterly for her overreaching diplomacy.

CHAPTER X

EMPEROR WILLIAM II. AND THE TSAR

THE reference in the previous chapter to the designs nourished in Berlin for securing possession of the Suez Canal leads me to recall the astonishment which gripped the few statesmen and diplomatic officials who learned of the secret suggestions made by William II. to Nicholas II. Naturally, such matters are not accessible to all who may wish to know, but few state secrets can be entirely hidden from the confidential servants of the Empire. This was a personal correspondence, but nevertheless its general purport was known to one or two of the Emperor William's most trusted advisers, who used their best endeavours to dissuade their headstrong ruler. But he was superbly certain that no man was adamant to the appeal of ambition, that no monarch would allow ethical considerations to stand in the way of territorial expansion and greater power. When the Emperor Nicholas paid his famous visit to Berlin on the occasion of the marriage of the Kaiser's only daughter to the present Duke of Brunswick, he was received there with an extraordinary courtesy and enthusiasm, and the Berlin Court tried to persuade him that his presence on such a momentous

occasion was far more appreciated than that of King George and his gracious consort.

When taking leave of his illustrious guest at the railway station, the Emperor William shook his hand with such apparent sincerity that the Tsar could really be excused if he imagined that from that day the relations between the houses of Hohenzollern and Romanoff would resume their former intimate friendliness.

When, however, the last guests had taken their departure, and the bride herself had left for her new home, the Kaiser began once more to turn his attention to foreign politics.

Though he had shown himself excessively attentive to the King and Queen of England, he had tried to avoid any serious conversation with George V., whose common sense and straightforwardness had never appealed to his cousin of Prussia. At that moment the Balkan War, or rather the Balkan crisis, had reached its culminating point. Austria, who, by the way, had carefully abstained from sending any official representative to the wedding festivities in Berlin, was pressing her German ally to interfere in favour of her schemes affecting Servia and Bulgaria. In Roumania the King, faithful to the wise line of expectant politics he had always followed with such success, was waiting for the signal from Berlin to come out either in the character of a belligerent or of a mediator, whilst, in Bulgaria, Ferdinand was making no secret of his intention to obtain for himself all the advantages of a situation he had done his best to muddle.

This, then, was the situation when the episode of the Imperial correspondence had its beginnings. It was not a propitious time for William II. to think of war; as yet he was unprepared. On the other hand, the presence in Berlin of his British cousins had only aggravated the feelings of deep dislike which he entertained toward them, and something in the quiet dignity of King George, and the sense of security which he seemed to carry about with him, had exasperated the Emperor. Nicholas II. is habitually nervous at Court functions, and the Emperor William deceived himself that so restless a temperament would also be unstable in character. Accordingly, William II. felt there would be little opposition to proposals which he had in mind—a scheme the success of which would mean the humbling of England.

When the Tsar returned to Tsarskoye Selo, he expressed himself highly pleased with his visit to Berlin. He even told Count Pourtalès, at that time German Ambassador at the Russian Court, that he had enjoyed himself far more than he had expected, and that he would always think with gratitude of the kindness he had experienced during his trip, not only from the Emperor William, but also from the people of Berlin. Count Pourtalès transmitted to the Kaiser the words of his Imperial cousin, and William II. then decided to act.

It was in July or August of the same year—1913, as the reader will remember—that a special messenger brought to Peterhof, where the Russian Imperial family was spending its summer holiday, an holograph letter from

the German sovereign addressed to the Tsar. It was written in the most friendly tone, and pointed out that if the peace of the world were to be maintained it was absolutely necessary to put an end to the constantly recurring agitation in the Balkans and to curb the ambition of all the small states of the peninsula, ambition which, in the case of Servia and Bulgaria, was threatening to assume most dangerous proportions. This letter also charged England with intrigue. That country, it said, was only waiting for the opportunity to annex Egypt, and was doing her best to entangle the Sultan in a web of difficulties, during which she would be able to wrest from him the nominal suzerainty exercised by the latter over that country. And, referring as if incidentally to the close friendship which united the Commander of the Faithful and himself, the German Emperor went on to suggest a common action having for its object the checking of English ambition, and at the same time achieving the secretly long-cherished desires of Russia to obtain possession of the Straits of the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles in exchange for her passive acquiescence in a combined action of the German and Turkish fleets against Egypt. The purport of this memorable letter was:

Russia will not have accomplished the task she has been entrusted with by Providence until she has become absolute mistress of the Black Sea. So long as England has a word to say in the question, she will oppose that legitimate ambition by all means in her power or at her

discretion. England, who has always posed as the friend of Turkey, will support her only so long as she maintains an attitude of hostility toward Russia. Otherwise, England, with amazing alacrity, will leave her to the tender mercies of her enemies. England is supporting King Ferdinand of Bulgaria, and encouraging him in his dreams of becoming one day Eastern Emperor, with Byzantium as his capital. The moment this comes to pass, Russia's day is over. She will remain a second-rate Power, strangled by its own immensity, and deprived of her vital southern outlet on the sea. She will find herself at the mercy of every adventurer and exposed to the greatest dangers from her neighbours. Now, should Russia see her own interests and consent to enter into an alliance with the Sultan, co-operating with him and with Germany in an action tending to neutralise the Suez Canal, and to hand it over to a European Commission, who would be entrusted with the task of preventing it from ever becoming a military base for any other than the Turkish army, she might obtain in exchange the neutralisation of the Straits for all Powers with the exception of herself.

When these desirable consummations were attained, continued the astonishing document, Constantinople would remain the residence of the Sultan, but be placed also under European control, whilst the capital of Turkey would be transferred to Brusa, on the Asiatic side of the Dardanelles. Thus Russia would become the sole mistress of the Black Sea, and find herself able to control

entirely the policy of the Balkan States. She might in time annex Bulgaria, and she would hold Servia in check. At the same time, England being put out of the running, the establishment of a permanent peace in the Balkan Peninsula, which was next to impossible as things stood, would be in a fair way to become accomplished.

Before the Emperor William II. had ventured to propose that amazing scheme to the Tsar, he had carefully arranged with the Sultan that the Suez Canal, while placed under a so-called European Commission, would in reality be put under German management. So definite, indeed, was the agreement that plans for the re-fortification of the canal were already prepared by German officers, and had been submitted to the Sultan for his confirmation. In this carefully planned conspiracy everything had been foreseen; only one thing was needed—and that depended upon the honesty and the loyalty of Nicholas II.

The Russian sovereign did not reply at once to this remarkable message. When he did so, after some days had passed, his answer was a proof of the entire straightforwardness of his character. He thanked his Imperial cousin for his communication, and then proceeded to explain that he was bound by an agreement which had for its aim the furtherance of good relationship between the two countries over which he and King George were ruling. Nicholas II. continued that he felt convinced the British Government would never break the engagements it had entered upon, and that certainly he could

not on his side fail to keep faith. He added that, though Russia might wish for the possession of the Straits, yet she would never desire to get them under her control at the price of any action that might be construed as treasonable. Besides, Russia wanted peace, and if she lent herself to such a scheme as that outlined, it was going to open the door to all kinds of complications, and assuredly lead to war. As to the value of the suggestions in regard to the benefit it was thought would accrue, he personally failed to see in what aspect the general political situation of Europe would change by England being driven out of Egypt. Turkey was not strong enough to govern that country alone, and it could hardly be handed over to any other Power without leading to all sorts of quarrels and strife. The danger of war, therefore, instead of being diminished, would be increased.

It would be very much better, in his opinion, to insist collectively on Turkey, as well as on Servia and Bulgaria, laying down arms and submitting their differences to the arbitration of a conference. He expressed the certain hope that the various ambassadors in London would be equal, even, to that difficult task, and would carry it through to a happy end. The Tsar concluded his reply with the remark that the programme outlined by William II. was undignified for any Christian Power to embark upon, and that he would consider himself dishonoured by lending his hand to such an enterprise.

When William II. received this reply his feelings can be imagined. I am aware that it caused an immediate

change of course, for after a few months I was the bearer of a letter to the late Archduke Franz Ferdinand. This communication was quite simple on the surface, merely suggesting a friendly visit to Ferdinand in the near future. From the Archduke and the Duchess of Hohenberg I brought back a cordial invitation, and in due time—which, however, was not until May, 1914—the German Emperor paid a visit to the heir to the throne of Austria-Hungary at the Castle of Konopischt in Bohemia.

CHAPTER XI

KING CAROL OF ROUMANIA

WILLIAM II. always felt great respect for King Carol of Roumania, who had been a close friend of the Emperor Frederick, the father of the German Emperor. King Carol had the reputation of being one of the wisest monarchs in Europe. During the many years in which he occupied the Roumanian throne he proved a model sovereign and contrived to steer safely among very troubled waters, and not only to remain in possession of his throne, but also to consolidate his dynasty. Alone among the Balkan sovereigns, he kept aloof from the various intrigues which had troubled the peninsula. Since the war of 1877 against Turkey he had not drawn his sword, and succeeded to a certain degree in imposing peace upon his neighbours when they had proved troublesome and tried to persuade him to mix himself up in their quarrels. In 1913 it was mainly through his exertions and owing to his firm attitude in regard to Bulgaria that King Ferdinand consented to listen to reason, and to accept the rather hard conditions of the Treaty of Bucharest. When Russia was on the point of interfering in that question, it was also the King

of Roumania who warned her of the serious consequences of such a step. Had he only been listened to, it is probable that the war which broke out in July, 1914, might have been avoided, or at least postponed for some time. Among modern rulers and statesmen the figure of Carol I. stands out as one of the most remarkable. He was a man of principles, straightforward, honest, true, sincere in all he said and did. When he accepted the throne of Roumania he was still a young man, and at that time no one believed his tenure would be long. Before he had decided to risk the adventure he consulted Prince von Bismarck, asking him what he ought to do. Bismarck replied that he might try it, as it would always constitute for him "a pleasant remembrance." The remark was not encouraging, and many men more experienced than this younger scion of the House of Hohenzollern might have hesitated before the risk of such an enterprise. Not so King Carol. He arrived at Bucharest simply as Prince Carol of Roumania, a vassal and dependent of the Sultan, whose suzerainty over the turbulent little principality was not then disputed.

This event took place in 1866, just before the victorious campaign which Prussia had conducted with such skill against the forces of Austria. Sadowa was fought between the day of the election of Prince Charles of Hohenzollern and that of the acknowledgment of his position as ruler of Roumania by the great European Powers. He arrived in his new country with more determination than ambition. Not easily would he be driven

out. He possessed tact to an even greater extent than courage; he was shrewd more than agile of intellect, and manifested abundant strength of will. He was always particularly interested in the progress of science, art, and literature, and made a study of social questions. Undoubtedly he did much to improve and to develop the resources of his country of adoption.

When he arrived in Roumania he at once appreciated its vast possibilities. He became the first business man of his new Fatherland, and scarcely any commercial enterprise was started in Roumania without his having a finger in the financial pie. He speculated, he built railways, factories; he became a shareholder in industrial concerns in his adopted country and elsewhere; he encouraged foreign capital to establish itself in Bucharest, and he developed the riches and the economical life of Roumania to an extent which astonished some of the strongest and cutest financial heads in Europe. When he died he left something like fifty millions, according to official records, and in reality a great deal more.

The financial genius of King Carol was provided with an outlet for the riches he accumulated in his epicurean love of the beautiful. He spent fortunes to gratify his taste for the exquisite, and grew to look with more than affection on his growing wealth. This fact explains, perhaps, why the policy of Roumania remained so constantly a pacific one. The King, who thought more of the fate of his own personal fortune, dreaded nothing more than to see it compromised. He was well aware

that even a successful war, if it did not stop altogether, would at least considerably delay the commercial expansion of the kingdom over which he ruled with such tact and ability. He did not care for military laurels, being wise enough to recognise their utter emptiness. If he had been offered the possession of Constantinople with the title of Emperor, it is probable that he would have declined the honour, but at the same time he would have taken active steps to prevent anyone else than the Sultan being so denominated. When his neighbour at Sofia developed the sudden desire to wrest St. Sophia from the Sultan, Carol at once not only refused Ferdinand his co-operation and support in that enterprise, but declared that he would oppose it by all means in his power. He foresaw that the equilibrium of the Balkan Peninsula would be disturbed by the expansion of any of the small nationalities, and wisely and astutely meant to keep the balance of power in his own hands so long as he lived.

He was honest in his way, if honesty consists in keeping one's word and of never by any means doing a wrong which was liable to be found out. But he was also a cynical, weary, disillusioned man, who hastened to laugh at everything, not the least cause of amusement being the way in which the world took him at his own valuation and gave him its confidence.

With a character of that kind, it was pretty certain that an adventure, be it a political or a warlike one, was not to be feared; and, whilst King Carol of Roumania lived, most of the statesmen who had the responsibilities

of the affairs of Europe in general could rely on his helping them to unravel the knot of many difficulties. Even William II. more than once had recourse to him in one or other of the scrapes which he periodically got into during the early days of his reign. Carol I. listened to him with an unvarying attention, and generally succeeded in giving him thoroughly sound advice, which enabled William II. to minimise and counteract evil effects that might easily have resulted from his imprudences. The King was essentially of a sympathising nature, though he could hardly have been termed a sympathetic man. There was far too much coldness in his manners, and he was excessively caustic. His very politeness appeared sometimes to be more studied than real, though at the same time it was thoroughly genuine, proceeding from the habits and customs in which he had been reared. He had learned the great art not to seem bored at anything that others might have to tell him, and this had won him much popularity with the other crowned heads of Europe, as well as among his own subjects.

When at his castle of Sinaia he allowed any peasant or labourer to approach him and to talk to him about their crops or vines. He was equally at ease in the part of a gentleman farmer as in that of a gravely attentive monarch granting an audience to this or that minister eager to explain to him difficult political questions interesting to him as well as to others. He was essentially an adaptive man, content everywhere and in every position in which he found himself, fully alive to

the value of the good things of this earth. He did not fear death, being satisfied that he was entitled to a seat of honour in the next world. This quaint persuasion contributed a great deal to the serenity with which he contemplated the final dissolution.

From the very first day of his arrival at Bucharest, King Carol meant to obtain the royal crown of Roumania. It is likely that he would not have joined Russia in 1877, when she attacked Turkey for the apparent reason of delivering Bulgaria from its yoke, had he not foreseen that the transformation of Roumania into a kingdom would be the inevitable reward that his conduct would entitle him to claim. He had, indeed, prepared himself for that contingency, and given careful attention to the training of his troops, whose help had proved invaluable to the Tsar. Like a true Hohenzollern, he had directed his efforts toward the establishment of Roumania as the dominant military power of the Balkan peninsula, and he succeeded.

The prize, however, did not come quite so quickly as he had expected owing to various circumstances, among which may be counted the stubborn opposition of Prince von Bismarck. He was not proclaimed king until four years after the war of 1877, and then only after he had spent considerable sums out of his private purse for the purpose of obtaining the favourable votes. It had not been so easy as Carol I. had expected to convert Roumania into a monarchy. Bismarck hated the idea; he did not like Carol, perhaps because he knew that King Carol was

one of the few men in the world who did not fear him. This displeased Bismarck thoroughly. He could never bring himself to be cordial to the new monarch of Roumania. Thus he committed one of his gravest errors, because Carol I., appreciating the worth of the foe with whom he had to deal, hastened, after William II. ascended the throne, to sympathise with the young Emperor's revolts against the authority of the great minister who for so long had been solely responsible for the policy of Prussia. King Carol, indeed, encouraged William in his desire to get rid of Bismarck. It is not generally known that, before dismissing Prince Bismarck, the young Emperor wrote to the King of Roumania asking him what he ought to do, complaining at the same time of the overbearing temper of his Chancellor. Carol I., as I happened to learn, replied most diplomatically in the following terms to his Imperial nephew: "I cannot advise you in the matter to which you refer; it is for you only to decide; other people cannot interfere, but if I were in your place I should like always to be the master in my own house." This letter sealed the fate of the great man who, by his skill and intelligence, had founded the German Empire.

This circumstance created between the two rulers a very powerful secret bond, one which William, later on, would have given much to have Carol forget. He had confided in Carol at this important crisis of his life as a sovereign, on one of those impulses to which he was so often subject and which he invariably regretted. King

Carol, however, was far too clever and far too cautious to show that he remembered the circumstance, but at the same time he contrived that William II. should never forget it. Whenever any European complication occurred, he interfered in it by entering at once into an amicable correspondence with the Emperor, and by making him feel that, since he had once asked his advice in one of the most important moments in his existence, he was welcome to do it always.

This attitude was a beneficial factor in the peace of Europe, because the influence of the King, which William II. could not very well ignore, was always an excellent one, and his tact contributed greatly toward clearing certain international difficulties which now and then arose to trouble the political horizon of Europe. The Roumanian sovereign, it must not be forgotten, was also a Hohenzollern, and had cherished the clannish feeling of that house in regard to its chief and to its own race; his fatherland was Germany, and Roumania remained but an incident in his life. Latterly, however, the unnecessarily aggressive attitude of Germany did not meet with his approval, and he began to transfer his affections to Russia. He had done his best to get his relative out of the multifarious scrapes in which he had found himself so often involved. Perhaps he had worked too energetically toward that result, for his efforts had produced a certain impatience in the mind of William II. An unfortunate effect of this reliance on King Carol was that it had rather impressed William II. with the conviction

that he had always at hand one who could effectively repair his mistakes. As a consequence the ruler of Roumania watched with considerable anxiety the career of his enterprising relative, and latterly had not displayed the same readiness to put things right. King Carol had become alarmed at the anti-English feelings developing in the breast of William II. The political and diplomatic experience of Carol I. was too extensive not to make him realise that a coalition of Russia, France, and England against Germany might have disastrous results for the Empire of the Hohenzollerns, and he did not care for the possibility of the Hohenzollern dynasty being overthrown.

These considerations had made him look with uneasiness and apprehension on the aggressive policy that Germany had entered upon, and had, practically, also imposed upon her ally, Austria-Hungary. King Carol had never approved of the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the realm of the Habsburgs, and had warmly admired the wise conduct of Russia in regard to that question. The attitude of the Petersburg cabinet had pleased him so much that, as hinted, he had begun to consider seriously the possibility of a *rapprochement* with Russia. He found a ready collaborator in the Russian minister at his Court, a young diplomat of unusual ability, M. Schébéko, who had at once grasped the immense consequences of inducing the Bucharest cabinet to look with favouring eyes upon the policy and the plans of the triple understanding between Russia,

France, and Britain. In his enthusiasm for the idea, however, M. Schébéko sometimes carried his zeal too far, and this led to certain frictions that might have been avoided had Russia proceeded with the same caution employed by King Carol.

When the Tsar conferred the rank of a field-marshal in the Russian army upon the Roumanian sovereign, it was felt that a great step forward had been made. Russian policy in the Balkans, and indeed everywhere else, had thereby gained an important auxiliary in the person of the wise and generally respected monarch. When, thanks to certain feminine interventions, matters had so far progressed that the possibility of an alliance between the Romanoffs and the Roumanian dynasty began to be mentioned, the different European cabinets thought it was time to watch with more than usual curiosity everything that was going on at Bucharest, especially as King Carol, though known to be in more than indifferent health, was nevertheless not suspected to be in so grave a condition as subsequently proved to be the case.

At that particular moment the King of Roumania was enjoying the confidence and respect of continental sovereigns as well as of their responsible advisers, of the Sultan and all the different political parties in Turkey, and also throughout the Balkans. After the tragic death of King George of Greece it was to his experience that finally all questions pending between the Balkanic States were referred, and the idea that he might be inclined to accept the opinions of Russia, and to approve of them,

could not fail to arouse intense emotion as well as a certain degree of anxiety everywhere.

More particularly was this apprehension felt at Vienna. Count Berchtold grew so alarmed at this development that he ventured to ask King Carol whether his friendliness toward Austria had undergone a change. The King replied with his usual caution that he would always concentrate his efforts in maintaining peace. The answer satisfied no one, and least of all the Emperor William, to whom it was immediately communicated.

This situation saw the beginning of German intrigue against Roumania, and William II. found an unexpected ally in a lady who stood in close relationship to the Russian Empress, and who, having the opportunity to see the Imperial family almost daily, was induced to work upon the mind of the eldest daughter of the Tsar and to persuade her that she would do better to remain in her own country than to marry the heir-presumptive to the Roumanian throne. Another area of German activity was found in fostering the ambitions of King Ferdinand of Bulgaria.

The marriage of the Duchess of Brunswick took place while these matters were developing, and created in the mind of William II. the thought of appealing to the Emperor of Russia to allow himself to be induced to look with indifferent eyes upon the wresting of Egypt and the Suez Canal from Great Britain. The details are already known to us.

King Carol—who was consulted—was very quickly

alive to the utter insanity of the plan, and he forthwith replied to his Imperial relative not to think any more about such impossible things. In the spring of 1914 King Carol sent his nephew and heir to Petersburg, together with his consort and their eldest son. The visit did not lead to the result which had been hoped for, as the young Grand Duchess Olga would not consent to wed into the Roumanian royal family. The Emperor William congratulated himself that he had obtained a decided success in that quarter, and the fact that he thought so reached the ears of King Carol, who expressed his displeasure in a most decided manner.

It was at this juncture that I was ordered to repair to Bucharest with a letter from my sovereign addressed to the King of Roumania, which gave rise to a curious conversation which I shall refer to in a later chapter.

My visit did not lead to much, and certainly it did not change anything in the international complications which suddenly seemed to spring from every side. All the efforts of the King of Roumania, all his appeals and advices tendered at Vienna, as well as in Petersburg, came to nothing, and did not even delay the crisis. When the Emperor and Empress of Russia had paid their famous visit to Constanza, in the beginning of June of last year, it was believed that it would lead to an ultimate Russo-Roumanian alliance, directed, if not against Austria, at least against the ever-growing ambition of King Ferdinand of Bulgaria. This supposition also came to nothing. Carol I. did not desire to bind himself at a juncture when

he instinctively felt his neutrality would be more useful to the cause of peace. He received his Russian guests with the utmost politeness, but he made M. Sazonov understand that he could not enter into any serious conversations.

M. Sazonov was not strong enough to insist on an immediate solution of a question which was of such vital importance to the future policy of Russia in the Balkans, and the interview of Constanza ended in disappointment.

Before two months elapsed Germany and Russia were at war. The conflagration that wise King Carol had worked all his life to prevent broke forth, and at its very beginning the Roumanian monarch, whose restraining influence would have been so invaluable when peace terms came to be discussed, suddenly passed away, and one of the most important factors in European politics vanished.

CHAPTER XII

IMPRESSIONS OF BUCHAREST

IN the course of my duties I had made one short stay at Bucharest in the year 1882, and when I returned there in the early months of 1914 I found the city decidedly improved. It had lost its Oriental tinge, and had become quite European. Large boulevards, splendid shops, and more music halls than ever had come into being. Altogether, Bucharest had a particularly prosperous air. I wrote at once to King Carol's aide-de-camp to ask for the honour of an interview with His Majesty, adding that I had arrived that same morning from Berlin. I learned in reply that the King was at his castle of Sinaia, in the Carpathian Mountains, but that he should be advised at once of my coming. I was also told that the Crown Prince and Princess Ferdinand were in town, and would be glad to see me. This was, of course, a command which I hastened to obey.

I found the heir-presumptive an extremely handsome, amiable man, with pleasant manners, a good carriage, and an interesting conversation. He seemed to be in possession of strong personal ideas in everything, but one who would refrain from airing them unless compelled to

do so. We talked about Berlin, where he had spent some of his early years; of London, which he declared he liked exceedingly, and of England. He strongly admired the English system of government, while at the same time owning quite frankly that it would not be applicable anywhere else. I tried to make Prince Ferdinand tell me his impressions about his recent journey to Russia, but he adroitly changed the conversation. In general he appeared to have wonderful self-control and enough presence of mind to be able safely to extricate himself from difficult or embarrassing situations.

He did not seem to be at all tired of his position as heir to the throne, and, if anything, rather shy at the thought of his future responsibilities—a state not often to be noticed in future sovereigns. On the contrary, he appeared to me to be very much attached to his uncle, whose health gave him genuine anxiety.

We spoke about the recent Balkan War, and he told me that the Roumanian army had been quite ready to start on a campaign, but by the King's wisdom such a misfortune had been spared to the country. He produced upon me the impression that he was a very sympathetic man, fully alive to the duties which awaited him, and keenly anxious to do the right thing. My feeling was that he was too serious for such a relatively young man, and I could not refrain from making a remark to that effect. He laughingly replied that when one was old enough to be a grandfather and had grown-up sons and daughters, it was about time to be serious.

The Crown Princess, without possessing a regular type of beauty, was pretty and fascinating. Most elegant in her carriage and bearing, she had a queenly look which gave her a regal dignity bereft of either hauteur or pride. One could see at once that she was conscious of her high position, but that she did not feel vain of it. Her conversation was brilliant, and touched upon almost every subject of current interest. There was much piquancy in her talk, and one noticed that she appreciated admiration. She certainly did not talk of her children with the same strong affection which her husband had manifested when referring to them, but one could see at a glance that she was a tender as well as a devoted wife. There was an English look about her which was very pleasant, but which explained the latent hostility with which the German Emperor usually referred to her, especially in recent times. Altogether, she was a most attractive being, with enough feminine charm to produce an impression which could not fail to attract.

I had also the opportunity to talk with the Prime Minister, who at the same time held the portfolio of Foreign Affairs. M. T. Majoresco had presided over the conference which formulated the Treaty of Bucharest, that had put an end, for some time at least, to the Balkan trouble. He is, perhaps, the most capable minister in Roumania, a pleasant companion, and a man singularly endowed with tact, and possessed of a keen political instinct. The King appreciated him as he deserved, but, it seemed to me, never quite trusted him. This, how-

Ferdinand I. of Roumania

Carol I. of Roumania

ever, must not be taken as a disparagement, because, so far as I could make out, King Carol trusted no one. Few knew his personal likes and dislikes, or his private opinions and intentions. M. Majoresco discussed the political situation with me, and I was very much struck with the fact that he viewed the future with considerable apprehension, particularly with regard to Germany. It was evident he did not care to say all that he thought about the subject, especially with one who, like myself, was supposed to enjoy the confidence of those in highest places in Berlin, but one could see that he knew more than he cared to admit. He was ardently patriotic, but he was just as evidently an ambitious statesman who was calculating in his mind the personal honour he might win from a clever manipulation of the affairs of his country at that particular moment of its existence. He struck me as a man of strong personality, who was by no means Bismarckian in his politics. He would not have walked over the dead bodies of his own convictions.

I spent but two days in Bucharest trying to ascertain something tangible as to the feelings of the Roumanians and their possible attitude in case of a European eruption. My impression was that the latter would entirely depend on the King, who alone represented public opinion in Roumania.

I would have liked to remain a little longer in the Roumanian capital, and felt rather sorry when a message arrived from the King requesting my immediate attendance at the castle of Sinaia, in the Carpathian Mountains.

In this lovely residence which he had built for himself, and embellished with fastidious taste, King Carol generally spent the summer season. When I arrived there I was received by the Queen, the celebrated Carmen Sylva, who welcomed me with that charm she alone possesses and which makes her such a remarkably attractive personality. She explained that the King was not in the castle at the moment.

Queen Elizabeth of Roumania, though an old woman and despite her many trials and sorrows, had kept the smile and lovely eyes which had made the Princess Elisabeth of Wied such a fascinating girl. Her great mental gifts have never been questioned, and though her eccentricities had given rise to a certain amount of ridicule, she was acknowledged by universal consent to be one of the most versatile women of her time. In Roumania her work in the domain of charity and education had been as considerable as the King's in that of politics and material development of the prosperity of the country. She was universally loved and readily forgiven the vagaries of her artistic imagination. This temperament bred strange ideas, such as that of appearing one day, at a festivity which she had given at the palace in Bucharest, disguised as a Watteau shepherdess, with powdered hair and short pink gown, leading a white lamb by a rose ribbon, which, unnerved by the novelty of the situation, became wild in the ball-room. The fact is that the mental balance of the Queen had been upset by the death of her only child, and it was years before she fully

recovered. This sorrow opened her heart to all who were sad or in want. The good she did was enormous. It would have been difficult to find a higher, nobler spirit than that of the Queen, but, unfortunately, it rarely condescended to look at things from a matter-of-fact standpoint. If she happened to be composing a poem or some beautiful musical piece, which for the time being absorbed all her intellectual faculties, it transported her whole soul into higher regions whither it was impossible for anyone less gifted to follow. When one looked at her in her flowing white garments, with the picturesque head-dress of the Roumanian peasants, in the half light which generally surrounded her, she appeared like some fantastic yet benign fairy, too beautiful to be true, too ethereal to be genuine. One could very well understand that the King admired her as something too holy even to desecrate by a thought or a touch, but one could yet easily imagine that his strongly practical nature would have preferred after all, in order to be entirely happy, a wife who would have sympathised more thoroughly with his personal tastes and pursuits and shared more definitely in his ambitions.

I was asked to dine with the royal pair, and the King welcomed me with entire cordiality. He had returned to the castle just before the meal, and whilst it lasted the conversation remained quite trivial, touching only on current events; but after dinner was over the sovereign invited me into his study, and, having asked me to sit down, began at once to speak about Berlin and the Emperor. For obvious reasons it is impossible to repro-

duce even a tithe of the momentous interview of which I was instructed to take a verbal reply back to Berlin. Such, it seemed, had been the desire of William II., and, as Carol I. rather acidly remarked, a wise desire too. "I cannot very well advise him in the present circumstances. He has always declared himself the champion of peace in Europe; he has advocated it constantly, and all at once you find him seized with a frantic desire to disturb that peace, all because he is afraid of a young man whom it would be easy for him to reduce to utter powerlessness if he really desired it. You may not understand it, but I will explain. Of course, it is no secret to you that the relations of the Emperor with the Crown Prince are anything but cordial. The heir to the throne is developing most dangerous designs against his father; he has succeeded in making himself enormously popular and of rallying around him a considerable party quite capable, under certain provocations, of going so far as conspiring against their sovereign, whom they accuse of cowardice in regard to Russia. It is those people who have completely inspired the Emperor with the fear that he may at a given moment be overthrown and replaced by his son, in whom the military party in Prussia sees its future avenger and hero. Your Emperor feels this opposition to him more than he cares to say. If he were sensible he would not pay attention to a campaign which is bound to die a natural death if left to itself, but he refuses to believe that half the attacks made against his person in the French and Russian Press are inspired,

and in some cases paid for, by the partisans of his own son in Berlin."

I could not reply to this strange declaration, which took me quite unawares, and therefore waited for the next words of the King. Carol I. went over to the window, and for some moments remained standing at it, looking at the beautiful landscape with the dark mountains for its background, absorbed seemingly in deep thought. Then he turned, and, resuming his seat, went on in a more matter-of-fact voice:

"It is not wise for an outsider to interfere in family questions. I cannot afford, or rather Roumania cannot afford, to be mixed up in such dangerous matters. She might have to pay too dearly for it later on. Personally, I can tell you that I think the Emperor ought to resume his old line of conduct, which has been such a success in the past, and that his apprehensions as to the aggressive intentions of Russia and England are utterly fallacious. If William were a little patient, he would see the truth of this remark. I certainly won't help the Emperor in his designs against England. I utterly disapprove of them, and, moreover, I feel convinced that any attempt in that direction must end in disaster. A sovereign ought to look at things objectively, not by the light of his personal passions."

"It is what Your Majesty has always done," I remarked. "But does Your Majesty really believe that the Emperor nurses a jealousy in the respect you point out?" I ventured to add.

"Do I believe it? I know it!" exclaimed the King, with more warmth than he had yet shown. "I know it better even than if he had told me anything about it. He is essentially of a jealous nature. On the other hand, the son loathes the father who can order him about, put him under arrest when he pleases, and who alone does not see in him the Crown Prince, but merely a naughty child to be punished for the slightest fault against the discipline which he has established in his household. Jealousy of one another has always been one of the dominant features of the character of the Hohenzollerns.

"Think about the present moment in the light of what I have said. Watch it, and then draw your own conclusions. Go back to Berlin," said the King, after a pause, "tell your Emperor that the only advice his old relative can give to him is to take a soothing mixture and to go to bed over it. Night is sometimes the best of advisers, and he had better try not to dwell upon his son's misdeeds. The boy's ambitions are certainly not worse than those in which he himself indulged during his father's short reign. History repeats itself. Let him take the lesson to heart, and remember that so long as he remains the master nothing can result from the wild militarism of the Crown Prince."

I never saw King Carol after that day.

CHAPTER XIII

THE GERMAN EMPEROR AT KONOPISCHT

NOT long after my return to Berlin from Bucharest I heard that William II. was going to pay a visit to the heir presumptive of Austria-Hungary at Franz Ferdinand's castle of Konopischt, in Bohemia.

There was not much love lost between Francis Joseph and his heir presumptive, whose domineering temper had more than once jarred upon his uncle's nerves. Franz Ferdinand was a strong character, and could not brook contradiction. He was entirely under the influence of the Duchess of Hohenberg, his morganatic consort, and of the Jesuits, by whom her marriage with the Archduke had been made possible. His leanings were frankly Clerical, and the Liberals looked forward with misgiving toward the future, being persuaded that Franz Ferdinand, at the instigation of the Ultramontane party, would adopt an aggressive policy toward Russia, the only serious rival of his ambitions in the Balkan Peninsula. His great friendship with King Ferdinand of Bulgaria had aroused considerable suspicions concerning his future intentions, and he was supposed not only to favour the views of the military party in Austria, but also those of the statesmen

who advocated the intervention of Austria in the internal affairs of Bulgaria as well as of Servia.

The Archduke had been suspected also of sympathising with the late King Milan of Servia to the detriment of the Karageorgevitch dynasty. When the brutal murder of King Alexander and Queen Draga had taken place, the heir to the Austrian throne was supposed to have urged upon his uncle the necessity of an armed intervention of Austria in Servia, the ultimate result of which would be the permanent occupation of Servia by the armies of the Emperor Francis Joseph. The idea had been viewed with a certain degree of favour by the leading spirits at the Ball Platz, and might have been put into execution had not the German Emperor interfered.

The Emperor William's intervention was deeply resented by the Archduke, and for some time their relations remained cool, if not actually strained. Later on, however, they grew more friendly, thanks chiefly to the influence of the Duchess of Hohenberg, who out of personal motives was doing her utmost to make friends with those who were likely to help her. The Duchess, who was certainly one of the most remarkable women of her generation, occupied a false position at the Vienna Court. She was the daughter of a Bohemian nobleman of high birth and lineage, but, her father having but small means, she had been taken as her lady-in-waiting by the Archduchess Isabella, the consort of the Archduke Frederick, more out of pity than anything else. The Archduke Franz Ferdinand had been struck by her rare intelli-

gence and fascinated by her clever conversation. His aunt found out his attraction for the society of her lady-in-waiting, and had turned the latter out of her house. The Duchess had always been a devout daughter of the Roman Catholic Church; the Jesuits, therefore, for reasons which may not have been disinterested, used all their best endeavours to induce the young Archduke to make her his wife. They succeeded. The wedding was celebrated at the castle of Reichstadt, in Bohemia. The progress of the personal history of Franz Ferdinand and his morganatic wife is not pertinent to the present narrative until after a long period from the wedding, when the Duchess noticed that her husband's relations with the Emperor William had lost something of their old cordiality. She applied herself to re-establish them and to make friends on her own account with the German monarch, feeling sure that his protection would help her over the difficulties she knew would be in her path on the day when her consort became Emperor. William II., on his part, was glad to find an ally in the wife of Franz Ferdinand, and he even invited the couple to visit Potsdam, where he treated the Duchess as due to receive like honour to that which would have been hers had she been of the blood royal. He had long talks with her, during which he gave her to understand that he would always look upon her not only as his equal, but also as a good friend and adviser in all political matters of mutual interest to the monarchy of Austria-Hungary and to Germany.

Nevertheless, when the Balkan complications arose, the personal relations of the Emperor with his friend again underwent a change. William II. said he did not approve of the intervention of Austria in favour of Bulgaria. He did not wish to appear at that particular moment too well-disposed toward King Ferdinand. It was at that time that William II. first entertained seriously his great plan to wrest the Suez Canal from England. It would not, therefore, have been consistent to seem too interested in the aspirations of Ferdinand. By reason, moreover, of these various circumstances he had to exercise a good deal of caution in his relations with the Archduke Franz Ferdinand, and he endeavoured to persuade him that it was not in his interest to create a conflict between Austria and Servia for the sake of Bosnia and Herzegovina, or even of Turkey.

The Duchess of Hohenberg entered readily into these ideas, exerting her influence over her husband to induce him to believe that his interests, even more than those of his country, demanded that he should cause peaceful elements to prevail in the decisions of the Viennese Cabinet. A visit which the couple paid to the King and Queen of England at Windsor Castle, during which the Duchess was treated with extreme courtesy, if perhaps with a shade less effusiveness than had been the case at Potsdam, confirmed her in the idea that the best policy her future sovereign could follow was to remain quiet and wait for the natural development of events.

The result of my visit to Bucharest—as the reader

knows—was a flat refusal to entertain the proposal inferred in the letter I carried from William II. to King Carol. The rebuff, however, it transpired, did not cause the German Emperor to bury his ambition. He transferred his attentions to the Archduke Franz Ferdinand.

The task before William II. was difficult and full of intricacies, but not beyond his versatile powers. True, he had discouraged Franz Ferdinand earlier, and now it became incumbent to provide some incentive to stir the Archduke into action. To my mind this lies at the bottom of the self-invited visit to Konopischt and the preliminary flattering of the Duchess of Hohenberg.

He spent three days with the Archducal couple, and used his best eloquence to persuade the heir to the Austrian throne that Russia had made up her mind to interfere in favour of Servia, and aid her desire to win the two provinces of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Their annexation by Austria had long been a thorn in the side of Servia. Neither the Archduke Franz Ferdinand nor Count Berchtold, who had been asked to meet William II. at Konopischt, fell in with his ideas. The Austrian Foreign Secretary did not care to raise a storm the magnitude of which he could imagine, and the Archduke feared that a war would resolve itself into failure, so far as Austrian ambitions were concerned. From the account of this visit, as it was told me quite soon afterwards, the Archduke had begun to resent the authority which William II. had assumed over him. More than that, his visit to England had convinced him that the British Govern-

ment was doing its best to restrain bellicose tendencies.

It therefore became difficult for the German Emperor to convince his friend that the moment had really come when the existence of German civilisation, to use his own expression, was threatened. William II. then tried the Duchess of Hohenberg, but he found her even more averse than the Archduke to a warlike policy. She distinctly told the Emperor that the time had not arrived when the Archduke could think of saddening the few years, or perhaps even the few months, which his uncle had left to live by precipitating the horrors of a European war. William II. became very angry, and without a word left the Duchess.

The last day of the Emperor William's stay in that old Bohemian castle was by no means pleasant. Considerable restraint had taken the place of the easy, familiar intercourse which had marked the beginning of the visit. A few hours before he said good-bye the Emperor tried to ascertain the Archduke's intentions; but Franz Ferdinand was not in a good temper, and his blunt reply was to the effect that most certainly he was not going to draw chestnuts out of the fire for another person. The two men parted in anger, and the Emperor remarked to the aide-de-camp who had accompanied him to Konopischt, that the Archduke would never listen to reason and was blind to where lay his best interests.

With all his clumsiness Franz Ferdinand was not a bad judge of character.

A month had hardly gone after the visit of the German Emperor to the historic and noble castle hidden among the roses which made its gardens such a thing of beauty, when, in Sarajevo, a murderer raised his pistol, and with two angry shots destroyed two lives. These shots did more—they fired the first signal of a tragedy the like of which the world has never seen.

CHAPTER XIV

SERVIA IN THE 'EIGHTIES

THE title I have given to the present chapter may be somewhat of a misnomer, seeing that the action of the story told herein begins in the 'seventies and stretches through the next decade into the 'nineties. The 'eighties was a period pregnant with happenings in the lives of the Servian royal family and full of portent for the future history of Europe. Of these events the murder of Franz Ferdinand was a distant reflex, for which reason it becomes opportune to dip into the tempestuous past of the Obrenovitch dynasty.

In those days Servia was still, as for centuries it had been, a revolutionary, half-tamed country, one in which human life counted for little, and where was exhibited an utter disregard of the common laws of mankind. The politicians of those days, too, were actuated by a perpetual opportunism marked by a selfishness that bordered on the marvellous, so guileless was it of any attempt at disguise.

The Karageorgevitch dynasty had superseded the Obrenovitch. Perhaps "blotted out" is the nearer expression. The father of the last representative was King Milan, one gifted with uncommon insight and adaptabil-

ity, but spoiled by Oriental guile and a mania for material pleasure. He was popular in his country for a considerable period, and probably would have contrived to keep the appreciation of his people had it not been for his domestic quarrels with his wife and the disgraceful scenes that followed. He understood perfectly well the nature of his subjects; when to flatter, equally as the psychological moment to crush his many enemies. But he was a man entirely without principle. After having appeared to favour Russian interests, he suddenly turned against Russia, and devoted all his energies to promoting Austrian influence in Servia.

The reason for his sudden *volte-face* lay in his personal relations with Queen Natalie, whose Russian nationality gave him a pretext for declaring himself the resolute opponent of her country. He accused her of sacrificing the interests of Servia. Whether this accusation was true or not I cannot tell, but it can hardly be denied that Natalie, in the different crises of her troubled life, sought Russian help and tried to foster Russian influence among her people. She believed that she would thereby be more secure from the likelihood of an attempt on the part of her husband to rid himself summarily of her, which was her constant fear. She was not clever, or she would have soon found out her mistake. Milan had been very much in love with her, and, if one can believe all that one was told by people who knew the secrets of the royal alcove, felt very much affronted at the curt way in which she received, or rather rejected, his affection. Beautiful as

she undoubtedly was, she had no idea of the power which her beauty gave her, nor of the advantage it might have proved had she only known how to use it. She was inordinately vain, and was in her way just as profoundly selfish as the King himself. She loved intrigue, and cared only for the people who consented to flatter her. There was a moment when she had hoped to overthrow King Milan and get herself proclaimed regent of the kingdom during the minority of her son. Her ambition in this connection came to the knowledge of her husband, who taxed her with it and asserted that Russia was at the back of it all.

Whether the plot had really existed or not it is difficult to say at this distance, but it has been related to me with minute circumstance by more than one. It is impossible to say more, because the first king of the new dynasty caused all papers connected with the private life as well as with the political activity of the Obrenovitchs to be destroyed. It certainly was not out of the range of possibility, when it is remembered that after the war of 1877 Russia enjoyed considerable popularity in Servia, and that the so-called Russia party, led by M. Pashitch, had many adherents. Milan was a man who never looked beyond the necessities or the satisfactions of the moment. All the political and private mistakes he fell into proceeded from his inability to weigh carefully the possible consequences of his actions and his instability of character. In private life he might have been endured, but as a king he was an execrable failure.

The Queen, who, as I have said, might have led the King at her will had she only given herself the trouble to do so, was in her way just as impulsive and passionate as her husband. To these defects she added a jealousy which was the more strange and inexplicable in that she did not care for him. She bitterly resented his numerous infidelities, and despised him for them. For his part, the King studied to shower one insult upon another on her, thwarting her in her dearest feelings. The disgraceful story of the kidnapping—it can hardly be called anything else—of her son from her is remembered in Servia to this day, and those who knew well the royal family at that time assert that this act, coming as it did from a man who had never troubled much about his child, was the prime factor in the subsequent troubles from which Servia has suffered. The child would undoubtedly have had a better chance if left in the care of the Queen, and, indeed, he might never have been taken away had she only acted rationally. Instead, she was actuated by the wish to make herself unpleasant to her husband, and sacrificed the interests of her son to that sole object.

She had been advised by one of her relatives who lived in Russia to apply to the Tsar Alexander III. and claim his protection against Milan, taking at the same time the little Crown Prince to Petersburg. The idea was not a bad one, and many subsequent sorrows might have been spared to her had she only followed that wise plan. But she believed that she was able alone to cope with her numerous enemies, and had a sufficient number of parti-

sans in Servia to bring about Milan's deposition. Some people say that she was imprudent enough to write in that sense to a false friend, who took the letter forthwith to the King, and that this letter confirmed the King in his intention to appeal to the German authorities to allow him possession of his child after he had divorced the Queen.

The King hesitated for some days before deciding to use force to recover his son, and was approached on the subject by one of the confidential friends of William II. At that time the Emperor had only been on the throne a few weeks, but had followed most carefully the course of events in Servia during his career as Crown Prince. He saw his opportunity to establish Austrian influence at Belgrade, and thus have an atmosphere congenial to German ideas. It did not coincide with the interests of the Triple Alliance to allow Russia to become paramount in Servia, and William II. well knew that any decided antagonistic step taken by Milan in regard to Natalie would more than anything else throw him into the arms of Austria, and consequently Germany would thus be able to establish herself firmly in the Balkan Peninsula.

Milan had as a great friend one of the few really intelligent men in Austria-Hungary. His name was Count Eugene Zichy, a nobleman of high lineage, enormous fortune, and great influence, who detested Russia, and who was constantly dreaming of the day when Hungary would be able to avenge herself on the Tsar for the ruthlessness with which his ancestor Nicholas I. had crushed the

mutiny of 1848. He exercised considerable influence over the mind of Milan, whom he often helped pecuniarily, and to whom he remained faithful to the end.

Count Zichy conceived the idea of creating a huge Balkanic State entirely dependent upon and welded to the Triple Alliance, which at a given moment might support it in an attack on Russia. It was he who first suggested that, thanks to the laxity of her diplomacy, the Tsar might easily be ousted out of the Balkans. Count Zichy knew Russia very well, had often been there, and carefully observed her weaknesses and noted the mistakes of those who governed her. He deluded himself to believe that with perseverance the vast empire of the Tsar might be reduced to the rank of a secondary Power, and, moreover, he persuaded Milan that an alliance with Turkey on the one hand, and with Germany and Austria on the other, would permit him to become the leader of a Balkan confederacy owing nothing to Russia, and give him a position far superior even to that of Ferdinand of Saxe-Coburg.

Milan acquiesced more readily because this advice was accompanied by a considerable gift of money, presented in the form of a loan. He dismissed Natalie, and forced the Archbishop of Belgrade to pronounce the divorce he required. He then set himself resolutely to the task of reorganising not only his army, but also the whole of the Civil Service of Servia, according to the model of German administration. Finally, it was through Milan as an in-

termediary that the question of sending a German military mission to Constantinople was suggested to influential men in Turkey, who in their turn persuaded the Sultan to secure for himself the services of Prussian officers who could train his troops according to the traditions of Moltke, Roon, and all the other military heroes upon whom Prussia prided herself.

That policy, if pursued with any perseverance and steadfastness, might have been useful to Servia, no matter how distasteful it would have proved to Russia. Unfortunately, Milan was not capable of perseverance, and he neither followed consistently the line he had taken nor attempted to make it triumph. He spasmodically rushed into extremes; one moment favouring Russia, the next Austria. By the instability of his conduct he disgusted all his warmest partisans, and, to culminate his errors, unexpectedly abdicated in favour of his son, under a regency.

A warm supporter of Russia, M. Pashitch at once became Prime Minister, and applied himself to the best of his ability to re-establish good relations with Russia. Alexander III. was still alive at that time, and he was disposed to look with an approving eye on the renewal of the terms of friendship which had formerly existed between Belgrade and Petersburg. Little by little things assumed their former course, and Russia became again an element of support for Servia in the latter's relations with her immediate neighbours. Russian officers were called to Belgrade to serve as instructors to the Servian

army, which was reorganised on the Russian model. Austria began to be represented as an enemy of Servian independence, and accused of intriguing in order to be given the direction of the education of the young King, over whom Milan had renounced control.

This calm, however, did not last long. The first person to break the peace was Natalie, who declared that she wanted to come back to Belgrade to resume her rank as Queen. The news was sufficient to draw the ex-King back to Servia, where he began to intrigue against his old Ministers. A plot was hatched which had for its object the imprisonment of the leading members of the so-called "Russian party," and very soon Milan found himself again at the head of affairs, this time as the guardian of his own son.

He installed himself at the Konak of Belgrade, and made himself very much at home there. All this time Natalie was living at the house of a friend. One day she met her former husband in the street. This led to further meetings, and in a few days Milan asked her to forget the past and to return to him, an offer which for once she was wise enough to accept, realising that her actual position was far from enviable. She left the city for a few days, and when she returned to it, after the decree which had reunited her to Milan, the city of Belgrade gave her a most enthusiastic welcome. She had lost none of her former popularity in Servia.

With the return of Natalie things changed considerably at the Court of her son. Owing to his youth the

boy, though King in name, was not allowed to exercise any authority. Milan held the reins of government and was responsible for the conduct of public affairs. The part suited him. It caused chagrin to the Queen, who saw her hopes blasted once more. She had to smile on the many Austrians who crowded into Belgrade, where Milan received them with open arms, and she had, moreover, to submit to the wild unrestraint of the King. Very soon life at the Konak became impossible, and as the Queen declared that nothing would ever make her exile herself a second time, Milan had to go, leaving his son to the care of Queen Natalie.

The Queen's triumph did not last long. The Cabinet, and M. Pashitch especially—who though not in power, yet was absolute master of the situation—found out that the Queen, no longer fearing her husband, was intriguing to bring about an armed intervention of Russia in Servia. But finding that no one listened to her, and that she was fast losing any influence she might have possessed in the past, Natalie forsook her son, and left again for Paris.

Before she left, however, she managed to have a long conversation with her son. During her absence from Belgrade his affection had suffered alienation, and he had become imbued with the belief that she was so swayed by ambition that she would have scrupled at nothing to wield unfettered the power she coveted. He was, therefore, pleasantly surprised when he found that Natalie advised him to put an end to the strife which was fast

making the Court of Belgrade the laughing-stock of the world. He should, she said, secure the necessary authority to rule the State independently of his advisers, none of whom was disinterested. She recommended certain officers who would be willing people to help him in that enterprise, and before she went away mother and son had decided upon a plan which they honestly believed was born in their own brains, but which had in reality come from Germany through the instrumentality of the Queen's sister, the Princess Ghika, whose husband occupied the position of Roumanian Minister at Berlin, and with whom the Emperor William had struck up a great friendship.

It was that sovereign who, seeing that M. Pashitch was once more gaining ground with his ideas of a Servo-Russian *rapprochement*, had made another attempt to snatch Servia and her young King from the snares of Russian influence—which was the way, I was told, William II had referred to the matter; and I have no doubt that he really viewed himself as the ordained saviour of Servia. The German Emperor suggested to Princess Ghika that the best thing her sister could do was to induce her son to proclaim himself of age, and thus deliver himself from the Ministers who held him in thraldom. Natalie was at once converted to that point of view, and, as we have seen, persuaded young Alexander to take the step.

These incidents explain the hidden causes that finally led to such grave results at the time of the assassination

of the unfortunate son of Natalie, and later still to the fate which overtook the Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife. Wide apart as the two catastrophes seem to stand from each other, they yet proceed from the same root-cause and are an outcome of the same reckless ambitions.

CHAPTER XV

ALEXANDER OF SERVIA AND QUEEN DRAGA

BETWEEN the warring influences of his father and mother it is no wonder that when Alexander became King of Servia the poor child knew but little of principles and was prone to succumb to the first temptation which arose. He had seen those whose conduct ought to have been an example to him resort to perfidious manœuvres in order to harm one another; he had had every opportunity to watch the chicanery of the different political leaders who in turns ruled the country; he had listened to men who constantly told him that in politics the end justified the means, and that victory belonged to the side who lied and cheated to the best effect.

In his boyhood he had been devoted to his mother, but when, in a literal sense, he had been snatched from her arms he had fallen under the influence of his unprincipled father, who, to be revenged on the wife who had disdained him, had blackened her character to his son. The result was that Alexander of Servia grew to despise both his parents, and at eighteen years of age was a youth who respected nothing and who was absorbed in himself and his personal pursuits.

When Natalie returned to Belgrade, reconciled at least in appearance to her husband, she found her boy cold and disdainful. He had forgotten the tenderness she had lavished upon him in the past, as well as his own affection for her. It is but natural that she resented this state of things deeply, and that her feelings in regard to Milan became even more bitter than they had been when he had divorced her. When she returned to Servia, and had consented to condone the past, the act did not carry with it a forgetfulness of his conduct. What she had desired was to gather around her once more her former friends and partisans at the Konak of Belgrade.

It was not long before she found that, as the mother of the young sovereign who had replaced his father upon the throne, she was watched in all her movements, and that everyone was trying to represent her to her son Alexander as an ambitious, unscrupulous woman, who would not hesitate even to commit crime if she saw in its accomplishment a personal advantage for herself.

Natalie applied herself to overcome the prejudices which had been instilled into her son's mind and to win his confidence. This did not prove so difficult after all, despite the evident coolness with which the young King treated his mother, because Alexander deeply felt the need of a friend in whom he could confide. When, therefore, she explained to him that he ought to make an attempt to govern alone, and to rid himself of a regency which insisted upon treating him like a baby, he listened with favour to the idea.

As I have already mentioned, the Queen was partly advised by her sister, the Princess Ghika, in whom the Emperor William II. had found a warm ally, and who inspired Natalie in the campaign which the latter waged against the principal Servian statesmen who wanted to force the young King to act according to their ideas and opinions. The Queen proceeded with the utmost caution, and directed the conspiracy with such consummate skill that very few so much as suspected its existence. Alexander, therefore, proclaimed himself of age on April 1st, 1893, and assumed the conduct of the affairs of the Government before anyone in Belgrade had even thought he had the slightest wish to do so.

At first this act of independent authority made the young King very popular throughout Servia. Everybody hoped great things from the boy who had shown he was a man instead of a puppet, and one and all hailed his act of independence with joy; the coup was considered to have been opportune and well planned. Milan became more unpopular than ever. He tried to have an explanation with the young King, but his questions were met with such freezing politeness that he decided not to pursue them any farther, and retired to Hungary, where he was welcomed by his old friend, Count Zichy.

Count Zichy was an extremely clever man, and he at once made up his mind that it was worth while to try, by making use of the undercurrents in the Court, to drive the young King into the embrace of Austria. In order to achieve this object Count Zichy spared neither

trouble nor money, and it was principally due to his efforts in this direction that Servia became inundated with people of Austrian birth. No pains were spared to transform Servia into an Austrian province.

The Count stood high in the good graces of the Emperor William, who had invited him on more than one occasion to shoot with him. During the frequent visits he made to Berlin he had been made acquainted with the general outlines of the plans of the German sovereign, and had entered with enthusiasm into his views as to the necessity of putting an end to Russian designs in the Balkan Peninsula. The Count became the principal agent of Prussia in Servia, and he could act with the more impunity because no one dreamed the inner politics of that country could be of the slightest interest to the wise people who ruled at Wilhelmstrasse.

Very soon the apparent lull in home politics which had followed the assumption of the reins of the Government by King Alexander came to an end, and the battle for supremacy in Servia was resumed with renewed vigour. Amid all this turmoil King Alexander lost his way; he felt helpless in presence of all these rivalries, animosities, and strifes, and, to make matters more perplexing still for the lad—Alexander was no more than that—the Queen also left Belgrade, saying to her son that as he would not listen to her advice he must act on his own responsibility. William II., in his interest in the welfare of Servia, wrote once or twice to King Alexander, urging him to consider Austria as his best

friend and his only protection against Russia. And all this time the quiet influence of Princess Ghika was busy.

Perplexed, worried, and utterly unable to see what path he ought to enter upon, Alexander took a short holiday in the hope that the quietness would enable him to decide upon a course which would be best for Servia. He went to Biarritz to see his mother, and there fell under the charm of Madame Draga Maschin, the lovely woman whom he was ultimately to make his wife.

Madame Draga Maschin was at that time something like thirty-two years of age. She had been married to an officer in the Servian army, Colonel Maschin, from whom, however, she had very quickly secured a divorce. Thanks to the protection of her brother, for whom Queen Natalie had a warm regard, and whom she felt bound to protect for various reasons too long to relate here, Draga had become lady-in-waiting to the deposed sovereign, and had very soon succeeded in making herself indispensable.

She was exceedingly clever, insinuating, possessed a wonderful charm, and was eminently attractive. She had a brilliant talent for music, and composed verses which were taking though meretricious. Apart from these advantages, she had a soft, pleasant, melodious voice, and appealed to the senses of men by an exceedingly sympathetic manner that spoke volumes even when she said nothing.

Queen Natalie grew to like her extremely, and when her son came to see her she often appealed to her lady-in-waiting to amuse and entertain him. Very soon the

young King, still a boy in years and in experience, fell under the fascination of Madame Maschin, who won his confidence and assumed the attitude of an entirely disinterested friend. She spoke with Alexander, discussed with him the difficulties of his position, advised him what to do or say, and conquered his heart by showing him plainly that she loved him for his own sake—a thing that the poor boy had always yearned for but hitherto never found. It was not long before the idea of marrying her filled the King's mind, and he forthwith started to carry out his desire, without reflecting for a moment on the opposition such an intention on his part was bound to meet with throughout Servia.

The first person who became aware of the state of affairs was Queen Natalie, and it would be difficult to describe the state of dismay into which the discovery plunged her. She implored her son to desist from his intentions, and at last, finding all her efforts futile, she appealed to King Milan himself and asked him to convince their son that he had no right so to brave the public opinion of the whole of Europe.

Milan called his son to him at Vienna, and used his best eloquence to dissuade him from the dangerous step he was about to take, but the influence of Draga Maschin proved stronger than that of Milan. Curtly and with boyish arrogance he told his father that he was going to please himself, and that he felt no impulse to listen to parents who had never troubled about his existence.

It was about that time that Draga was approached by

a mysterious personage, who turned out to be one of the confidants of the German Emperor, and asked whether, in case she received certain necessary help to secure the fulfilment of her heart's desire, she would use her influence over King Alexander to further Austrian interests in Servia. Draga was an ambitious woman, but she was a patriot. She was no fool, moreover, and realised the true import of the proposal, but felt afraid to say so for fear of a trap. She therefore treated the message as a joke. Unfortunately for her, the fact that she had received the mysterious emissary did not remain secret, and later on the knowledge was used against her by the very people who had first approached her.

When Belgrade heard of the impending marriage of its young King it became furious, and from the very outset Draga found herself placed in an impossible position. For her own sake it was regrettable that she made matters worse by affecting a ridiculously overweening pride. Her very fear of being thought familiar led her to become haughty and insolent toward people she should have done her best to conciliate. Instead of allying herself courageously with one party, she sought to pander to all, with the result that each one dubbed her false and unreliable, and when she was in danger abandoned her to her fate with the utmost indifference.

For one moment, however, the efforts of Germany seemed to prevail, and Draga, utterly discredited in her own country and made the object of bitter and unwarranted attacks, in pique turned her thoughts toward

Berlin, whence she expected help and protection even more than from Vienna. She invited the German Minister to come to the Konak, and told him that she was ready to favour the development of Austrian policy in the Balkan Peninsula. The tragedy of it all was that when this occurred it was already too late to save herself; the plot was in action which doomed the Queen and her youthful husband to a cruel death. The awful culmination is too well known and its details are too harrowing to bear repetition, but there are certain circumstances connected with it which have long remained unknown to the general public. The soul of the conspiracy was a man who on different occasions has played an important part in the internal troubles which during the last quarter of a century have shaken Servia, and who undoubtedly is to this day one of its leading figures and most active politicians. That man was at different times a member of the Government, and had favoured Russian interests and Russian influence.

Another man of political eminence who was a strong supporter of Russian interests, and who believed the regeneration of his country could only be accomplished under the shadow of the Tsar, was M. Pashitch, of whom much has been heard in recent years.

M. —— hated King Milan, who had done his best to get rid of him even to the length of an attempted assassination. His personal views in regard to the marriage of the young King were tinged by the fact that he knew somewhat of the early life of Queen Draga when

she was only just out of her teens. His rage knew no bounds when he found out that the Queen was making advances to the Austrian party and endeavouring to turn her husband's mind against Russia. He tried to induce M. Pashitch to wink at a plan to kidnap the Queen and to shut her up in an asylum. He also wanted Draga to adopt the principles of the Russian party. The Queen, knowing the man and that he knew her earlier career, feared that this invitation contained a snare, and elected to follow the advice of the German emissaries who had found the means to approach her, and, further, to display all her powers of persuasion to induce the King to fall in with the wishes of the Austrian Minister.

Such conduct was the last straw. The politician in question had hesitated before the accomplishment of what he felt would be an atrocious, even if, as he thought, justifiable, crime. But when he had ascertained of a certainty that a pact of alliance between the Queen and the Austrian envoy had been concluded, he hesitated no longer, and began at once negotiations with Prince Peter Karageorgevitch, the pretender to the throne of Servia, who was living in Geneva.

Prince Peter declared that though he was ready to step upon the throne of his native country should there be any expressed wish for him to do so, he would not be privy to any enterprise by which the life of King Alexander could be compromised. He was asked whether he would sanction measures of force in case these became necessary, and is reported to have replied "that he would

prefer not to be asked that question, and that he felt sure his friends would act for the best."

This was quite sufficient. When M. —— returned to Belgrade he had made up his mind what to do, and he acted accordingly.

His first step was to call together a few officers of whose feelings and opinions he felt quite sure, and before them he unfolded a plan by which it was decided to carry away the Queen and to lock her up in a monastery, whence she would never emerge alive. What would happen were she to show resistance was left on the knees of the gods, but none among the people who were present doubted what the outcome would be.

On June 10th Queen Draga received an anonymous letter by which she was implored to do her best to restrain the King from showing himself too much in public during the days that were coming on, as well as to keep a strict watch upon her own movements. She simply laughed when the warning was conveyed to her. Her enemies, however, neglected no detail. The sentinels at the palace were suborned, and keys obtained of all the doors leading to the private apartments of the sovereigns.

The King and Queen had already retired for the night when the conspirators invaded the Konak. Frightened at the sound of voices, Draga persuaded her husband to seek a refuge behind a curtain in their bedroom. There they spent over three hours whilst the whole of the palace was being searched. Unfortunately, a slight movement which they made betrayed their presence. But for this

circumstance it is probable that they would have remained undetected. One of the party went up to the King, who was holding the Queen, and dragged him into the middle of the room. As the unfortunate monarch wanted to resist and shield her from the assassins, they stabbed him to the heart, and then threw his body out of the window into the street. Draga was butchered, for no other expression can be used, and her body also hurled into the street. Later, the corpses of the King and Queen were found by monks, who buried them in an old abbey where the Obrenovitch dynasty possessed a family vault.

The next day Prince Peter Karageorgevitch was elected King.

CHAPTER XVI

SERVIA UNDER KING PETER

THE Karageorgevitch dynasty, after a lapse of some sixty years, came back to the throne in the person of King Peter. Certain melodramatic writers have said that he waded through blood to his throne, thereby inferring that Prince Peter was privy to the crime which brought the crown once more to his House. Anyone who knows his character will never believe this accusation for a moment. That he knew a revolution was in course is not doubtful, but it is also quite certain that the conspirators did not tell him what were their ultimate intentions. When the news of the assassination of King Alexander was brought to Prince Peter he was shocked beyond expression, and it is certain that in the first moment of horror he declared that he would not appear to have anything to do with such an atrocious deed, preferring to renounce any pretensions he might have to the crown of Servia.

Happily for the brave little nation, Prince Peter's brother, Prince Arsène Karageorgevitch, had sufficient influence to persuade Peter to take the throne. Formerly Arsène had been in the Russian service as an officer in a

crack regiment—the Chevaliers Gardes. He possessed a most determined character, and he it was who put the sword into the hand of his brother, insisting on the latter accepting the sovereignty which was thus unexpectedly thrust upon him. He asserted that the Karageorgevitchs owed it as a duty to Servia to return to the throne at that perilous moment of Servian history. If a regular government were not proclaimed at Belgrade, Arsène argued perceptively, Austria would not hesitate to occupy the capital and to invade the country. He so strongly forced his decisive arguments upon his brother that a few hours later Prince Peter was proclaimed King of Servia.

He has filled this difficult position with great tact and undoubted political skill. Very soon Servia entered into a long period of prosperity, and though sceptics used to shake their heads and say that the unusual calm could not last for an appreciable period, yet it is certain that the country began to breathe more easily than had been the case for many years.

The strength and success of the new reign and the stability which seemed to be in a fair way to become established aroused first the astonishment and then the uneasiness of German diplomacy, in which the German Emperor shared. Nor was the Teutonic mind soothed by the different reports received from Constantinople in the strain that ere long Servia would secure the entire sympathy and protection of Russia. Out of this new development it was recognised that Servia might con-

ceivably develop ambitions in regard to supremacy in the Balkans, which would end in the overthrow of Ferdinand of Bulgaria, at that time still the Prince Ferdinand.

At this juncture Germany saw that it was high time to take steps if she wished not to abandon the Emperor's cherished aim—the annihilation of Russian influence in the Near East. In order to achieve this desirable object it was vitally necessary to enlist the co-operation of one of the small Christian kingdoms of the peninsula. William II. did not quite trust Ferdinand of Coburg, whose faculty for forgetting promises inspired him with deep mistrust; Roumania was already entirely German, or at least he supposed that she was; Montenegro was but a dwarf, to which there was no necessity to pay the slightest attention; whilst Greece could always be managed, thanks to the strong German sympathies of the Crown Prince and to the influence of the Crown Princess Sophie, who was the sister of the Emperor. Only Servia remained. If she could be drawn into the German Emperor's political constellation she might prove of infinite value in assuring the humiliation of Russia.

But it was not so easy. There were patriots in Servia who were determined not to allow her to be launched on dangerous seas, and who, moreover, were popular all over the country. Among them was M. Pashitch, of whom I have already spoken, a wise, experienced, clear-headed politician, who looked beyond the success of the moment,

and who was the leader of the progressive and loyal party in Servia. Associated with M. Pashitch was M. Guentchitch and a few other sincere lovers of their country. They advocated their views with strength and eloquence before King Peter, and he was wise enough to follow their lead. Thereby he more firmly established himself and his dynasty on the throne.

Very soon the Austrian Minister at the Court of Belgrade called the attention of his Government to matters in Servia and certain developments brought about by Servian influence in Bulgaria. Serious alarm was caused among the private councils in Vienna, and the Emperor William was urgently advised of the course which events were taking at Belgrade.

It soon became evident to the few who were acquainted with the inner political ramifications that trusted agents of Germany were at work, for there arose an exponent of the advantage which Servia would gain from an understanding between Vienna, Berlin, and Belgrade in the person of the Crown Prince. The fact that Prince George should so opportunely come forth as the champion of a coalition against which his father and the more progressive statesmen were fighting all the time was significant, as, too, it was that Prince George should at that time suddenly recover from the pecuniary embarrassments which had long beset him. Things had not been smooth between the Crown Prince and his father owing to the warped ambitions of the son, and because of his social eccentricities.

Prince George had always been the black sheep of his family. Of an active and boisterous temperament, he had, ever since he reached the years of discretion, chafed under the strict discipline in which he had been brought up, and rebelled against the strong hand with which his father ruled his family. At different times the Crown Prince had tried to induce the King to initiate him into statecraft and to grant him some independence without his every step being reported. The King, who was in perpetual fear as to what his son might say or do next, refused to accede to this desire, remembering that more than once he had had occasion to reprimand Prince George for his unseemly licence of language and of deportment. King Peter's reproofs had been received in anything but a grateful mood, and very soon the Crown Prince set himself up in direct opposition to his father, and began to gather round him a group of friends determined to support him in any antagonism he might adopt to annoy the Sovereign and his advisers.

At a moment when this state of things became acute the Crown Prince was approached by an agent, who gave him to understand that in case of a *coup d'état* of some sort he might count on the protection of Germany as well as that of Austria. The Crown Prince was at first flattered though surprised, then slightly alarmed, and it was whilst under the apprehension caused by that last-mentioned feeling that he opened his heart to one of his friends, who happened at the same time also to be a friend of M. Pashitch. The Ministry, naturally, quickly learned

that the Crown Prince was meditating a revolt against the authority of his father, and that he planned to have Peter locked up in a fortress whilst he himself was proclaimed King of Servia. M. Pashitch was thunderstruck, but at the same time wise enough to see that however plausible, it might be untrue, and even if it were every bit as serious as it was made out, he could not make any use of the information, as at that time he did not possess a shred of proof justifying an accusation of conspiracy against the heir to the throne. In this perplexity he had recourse to the ability of a friend who more than once had risen to the needs of an occasion.

The Crown Prince in his frequent quarrels with his father had always threatened to resign his rights to the crown and to transfer them to his brother Prince Alexander, a dashing, clever, energetic young fellow, who favoured Russian interests and hated Prince Ferdinand of Bulgaria. He had always been his father's favourite, and his relations with the Crown Prince, though very affectionate, had not been altogether smooth. According to the ideas of the particular group of political men represented by M. Pashitch, he would make an ideal ruler to follow his father when in the course of nature the throne should be vacant. This fact led to the conception of the idea of putting him in his elder brother's place.

The proposal, however, would not be easy to carry out, considering that, in spite of his many extravagances, Prince George had done nothing provable that would have warranted such a grave measure as dispossessing him

of his rights. The alternative, therefore, was to induce Prince George to do it willingly. The Prince fell into the snare one day when he happened to be in a particularly bad temper, and was, moreover, enlivened by champagne. He declared with violent emphasis that he was tired of being treated as a child, and called for paper and ink to be brought to him. He was going, he said, to write at once to his father and to the Skupstchina, throwing over his reversion to the crown; that, he boasted, would soon bring his father to his senses. Pen and paper together with the necessary ink were, of course, speedily forthcoming, and he vaingloriously signed his name to documents whereby he became a private individual, and an impecunious one at that. The latter deficiency was, however, removed, because the King insisted on the debts of Prince George being paid and on his being granted a large allowance.

Later on, when the excitement of the first moment was over, Prince George bitterly repented the hastiness which had made him yield to the advice of interested people. When he attempted to say something of the kind, he was told that there was no going back on a resolution which had already been made public, and that he must resign himself to the inevitable. He took the thing in better part than could have been expected, and, forgetting the ambitious dreams which he had nursed, accepted his new position with enough good humour and philosophy to make the world believe that he had really desired to be free.

Prince George of Servia

Crown Prince Alexander of Servia

After the renunciation of Prince George matters became at once easier for the partisans of Russia. Prince Alexander submitted readily to the advice of M. Pashitch; and when later the only daughter of King Peter married a member of the Russian Imperial family, it seemed that nothing was going to prevent the conclusion of an offensive and defensive alliance between the Romanoffs and the dynasty of Karageorgevitch.

The Emperor William, however, was not altogether so pleased as people were in Servia. He saw once more his cherished plan crumbling to the ground, and the possibility of a strong Slav kingdom establishing itself, with the help and under the protection of Russia, in opposition to weak, tottering Turkey and in rivalry to the new Bulgarian monarchy. It became necessary, therefore, to press certain events, the inner purport of which I knew, and which, personally, I considered to be unwise on broad lines of statesmanship. Yet, as ever, the German Emperor compelled those who thought as I did to remain silent, and he sought to compel Servia to declare itself in favour either of Austria or of Russia, so as to be sure of her attitude in future eventualities. Concurrently, William II. threw himself resolutely into an anti-Russian policy, and used all the means at his disposal to persuade the Sultan, and especially Enver Pasha, that the time had come when Turkey ought to avenge herself for her past defeats and shake off influences which had long restricted her actions.

When the threats of a war in the Balkans shook the

equanimity of Europe, the Emperor, instead of advising Turkey to yield, encouraged her in her ideas of resistance, and concurrently excited both Servia and Bulgaria against the Turkish Empire. Whilst the Berlin Cabinet was continually repeating that it wished for peace, and that peace ought to be imposed on the belligerent parties, I know from my own observation and the hints given here and there that the Emperor personally was advising the Belgrade and the Sofia Cabinets not to renounce one iota of their pretensions, and at the same time insisting on the Sultan refusing any compromise.

As we know, the war broke out, and was followed by a campaign in which Bulgaria fought against Servia and Greece. During its course King George of Greece was murdered at Salonika, and Austria began showing her cards, allowing the world to guess that she did not mean to let Servia have it all her own way, and that, whatever happened, she would stand by her faithful friend Prince Ferdinand of Coburg.

In Servia M. Pashitch was never idle for a moment. He saw that the moment had come when the basis of an alliance between Russia and the Balkan States might be discussed. He sent his friend M. Guentchitch to Petersburg, where he remained five months, seeing Ministers and important political men, and working steadfastly for the cause of Servia. His perfect knowledge of the Russian language and his experience in politics were of extreme use to him, while thanks to his efforts, which included numerous contributions to different

Russian newspapers, he soon succeeded in winning a widespread and practical sympathy for his country.

His efforts were seconded in Belgrade by the Russian Minister there, M. Hartwig, one of the cleverest, ablest diplomats that Russia has ever possessed. M. Hartwig knew the East through and through, having been for something like ten years under the orders of Count Ignatieff during the latter's tenure of the Constantinople Embassy. He hated Austria, and always declared that until the Tsar had annihilated her as a dangerous and intriguing foe Russia would never be able to develop her vast resources in peace. He worked with all his might to secure a Russo-Servian alliance as a precaution against the storm which he repeatedly warned his Government was brewing in the distance. It was his firm belief that the world had reached such a state of complexity that nothing short of a bloody conflict could make things straight.

M. Hartwig understood better than most the subtleties and sophisms which guided policy in the Near East, and to counteract the effects of Austrian duplicity and German intrigues he would have liked his country to stand out boldly and pose as the champion of the Slav. He laid the basis of an understanding, the details of which were ratified by King Peter when he visited Petersburg during the course of last spring.

When the peace of Bucharest had been signed, people began to breathe freely once more, and to indulge in hopes that the everlasting Eastern Question would at last be

allowed to disappear for some time from the political horizon. Austria seemed to have become reconciled to the inevitable; Ferdinand of Bulgaria appeared intent upon repairing the havoc produced in Bulgaria by the last war; Turkey had won back Adrianople, and seemed quite content with a piece of good luck which she had had no right to expect. All seemed fair for peace, but it was only in seeming; the everlasting unknown quantity was still at work, biding its time to engulf men and nations in a bloody eruption.

CHAPTER XVII

A RUSSIAN'S OPINION

M. HARTWIG, whom I have mentioned in the previous chapter, was certainly one of the ablest diplomats Russia ever sent abroad to watch over her interests, owing largely to his remarkable sense of intuition. Though I knew him very well and was in constant intercourse with him to within a day or two of his death, I never could quite make out the extreme rapidity with which he came to conclusions and—sometimes before anyone else had had time to realise that a thing had really happened—prophesied with an accuracy that seldom was proved wrong what would follow upon it. He was an ardent patriot, and though he longed for Russian paramountcy on the Bosphorus, he was not a fanatical Slavophil. As a matter of fact, he did not care for Bulgarians or Servians; what he wanted was that Russia should acquire an undisputed influence in the Balkan Peninsula. He believed firmly in the mission of Russia, felt convinced that her destiny lay in Constantinople, and that she was bound sooner or later to get there. He wished it might be sooner. His *bête noire* was Austria; he firmly believed that she represented the most

disquieting element in Europe, and that it would be her diplomacy which would entangle Russia in a war in which it was most certain that Germany would interfere. M. Hartwig had spent some years in Buda-Pesth, and had used the opportunity which was thus afforded him to study with the utmost care and attention the political men and the military preparations which were being made in Austria. He distrusted profoundly the various statesmen who controlled the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. He knew that these men, blinded as they were by excessive vanity, would not hesitate under certain circumstances to resort to subterfuge of the grossest kind in order to prevent friends of the day before realising the nature of the attacks which were being prepared against them.

M. Hartwig had continually warned his Government that something was being premeditated against Russia by the two allied countries of Germany and Austria. His intuition caused him to suspect that the suddenly aggressive policy of the Austrian Cabinet in regard to the Slav movement in general was the advance guard of a stronger determination. M. Hartwig never concealed his belief that the underlying motive was the determination of the Emperor William to destroy the two Powers —Russia and England—which in his eyes represented the principal obstacles to German expansion.

One reason for the uncanny foresight of M. Hartwig may have been his profound knowledge of the doings of the German Emperor. The fact that he was so strong in

his belief that William II. was not what he seemed may also have tinged his judgments, for the antagonism amounted almost to an obsession. In justice to M. Hartwig it must be said that his was not the obstinacy of a man arguing on nebulous superficialities, but the outcome of a serious and a thorough study of William II. Starting from a well-considered deduction that upon the German Emperor alone depended the peace of the world and the maintenance of the *status quo* in Europe, M. Hartwig told me that he had made a collection of the Emperor's various speeches in the hope of finding in them the clue to that complicated and mystical character who, as M. Hartwig put it, was capable of an unlimited number of good and bad actions; who, though most religious in his words, was at heart the greatest moral Nihilist that has ever existed; who, beyond his personal glories and triumphs, saw nothing and cared for nothing save the material aggrandisement of his country. When all the world had praised the moderation of the Emperor and admired his efforts in the cause of peace, and when it had been even proposed to grant him the Nobel Prize, M. Hartwig was unmoved; he protested, indeed, against what he called "this utterly false appreciation of the disposition of William II." He kept repeating that time would show how durable were the intentions of the Emperor, and that personally he did not trust them.

We had more than one discussion on this subject, discussions which, as may be expected, sometimes bordered

on quarrels, and during which he persisted in his opinion. He assured me that all matters connected with German armaments, though apparently well known everywhere, were in reality buried in the most profound mystery, and that for every soldier and for every gun openly avowed there were two or three about which the world at large knew nothing at all.

"Germany is a vast camp," he told me once when I passed through Belgrade on my return from a journey to Sofia about which I shall speak presently, "and most likely it is a fortified camp into the bargain. Its storming will require the most tremendous sacrifices, and God knows whether even these will prove sufficient. One does not with impunity train a nation for forty-five years in militarism without war breaking out one day. When the fruit is ripe it is bound to drop from the tree. You believe Germany to be pacific, in which I do not blame you, because a man must have faith in his own country; but Germany is hypnotised. A kind of exasperation of public opinion has systematically taken place in your country, with the result that she is quite persuaded that war will be declared upon her one of these days, and so needs ever to be ready. The German people are pacific by nature, I know it well, but Germany is far from being pacific; there lies the whole difference. And this difference, you will see, will bring catastrophe."

"I cannot believe you," was my reply. "I know my country also. I am bound to understand her feelings better than you who are a foreigner, and I assure you

that not one of my compatriots desires a war, especially a war with you."

"Can you guarantee me the feelings of your Emperor on that subject?" asked M. Hartwig.

I stopped for a moment, rather at the remembrance of M. Hartwig's obsession than to consider a reply, and whilst I was thus hesitating he remarked in that quick manner of his which was so impressive:

"No, you cannot. When you come to think about it seriously you are not at all sure that the Emperor wants to preserve peace in Europe."

"It is you who are mistaken," I replied with heat. "I have no doubt in my mind as to the desire of the Emperor to avoid a war. What made me pause a little was that I cannot help thinking that you are prejudiced."

"No; I am not prejudiced," said M. Hartwig. "I should be a very bad servant of my country if I allowed prejudice to rule my judgment. I only see clearly what others will not look upon. Germany must expand, must look about for new fields for the activity of her children. War is the necessary outlet. Her navy has now some chance of success, and the army is being prepared. The day it is ready your Emperor will put the match to the fire."

"Surely you exaggerate, or else you are under a bad influence this evening," I remarked. "It is idle and unjust to believe such things of a ruler whose words tell such a different tale."

"Ah, well," replied M. Hartwig with a shrug of the

shoulders, "you will think one day of this conversation. Perhaps I shall be dead, but you will remember how I prophesied to you that we tremble to-day on the brink of great events, and how I said that Germany as she stands to-day is a danger not only to the peace, but also to the civilisation of the world."

M. Hartwig did not finish with that remark.

"You may ask me," he continued, "what makes me take such a gloomy view of the situation, but here in Belgrade, as all over the Balkan Peninsula, we see things perhaps more clearly than anywhere else. We all know that the slightest incident in these regions may bring about events of unusual magnitude, and recently the intrigues of Germany among the Slav populations of this country have assumed quite threatening proportions, as I have had the opportunity to see for myself."

"But why?" I asked.

"Because," came the immediate reply, "Germany covets the Suez Canal and wants, too, to march eastward. She can only do so either by the help of Turkey and the connivance of Balkania, or by crushing both, and this latter by the indirect means of Turkey and the Balkan States taking arms against each other. Any Balkan conflict, all Europe knows, will involve Russia; it is that for which your Emperor is waiting."

"But your suspicions cannot be correct," I said. "William II. has always done all that he could to maintain peace. There is absolutely no ground for your assertion that the Emperor has changed so utterly."

"You forget one thing," said M. Hartwig. "You forget the relations which now exist between the Emperor and the Crown Prince. Remember that and you have the key to many a riddle which will yet puzzle the world. So long as the Emperor was sole master of the situation he could still be relied upon to a certain extent; but now that he sees that his son has won for himself a considerable amount of popularity among the military party he finds his hand forced, and inevitably he will be obliged to make war. The friends of the Crown Prince are accusing the Sovereign of cowardice, and already say that he is afraid of a war."

I jumped up on hearing this remark, vividly recalling the words which a few weeks before had been used by the King of Roumania. This similarity of opinion in two men so opposed to each other, and each in his way so remarkable, impressed me deeply.

I left Belgrade the next day, and never saw M. Hartwig again. He died quite suddenly a few weeks later, died in the house of his Austrian colleague with whom he had been discussing several important political questions.

Many dark rumours were put into circulation concerning his unexpected and tragic end. M. Hartwig was certainly a man who saw things with a much clearer vision than the majority of people, and his death at the very moment when his services might have been of inestimable value to his country added to the difficulties of the time. His vast knowledge of Eastern affairs, his experience of

politics in general, and his strong sympathies for the English alliance, which were the more curious that he had never cared for England as a nation, would have been most useful to M. Sazonov. Fate interfered, and when he died Germany lost an adversary who was the more dangerous in that he never allowed himself to be carried away by passion, but judged of things and worked at them with the utmost coolness and presence of mind.

CHAPTER XVIII

RIVAL INFLUENCES IN GREECE

FEW of the nations of the Near East have been free from the overtures of German diplomacy, and Greece is no exception. Owing to certain circumstances hereinafter made plain, Athens seemed to give promise of fruit in the shape of a definite and practical friendliness between the Court of Greece and that of William II. How diplomacy fared, and to what extent the personal feelings of members of the Royal Family of Greece entered into the relationship between their country and the German Empire, forms a significant page of European history.

In certain other directions in Mid-Europe the net result of sedulous diplomatic courting on the part of Berlin was a harvest of uncertainties and failures. Even where inducements had been pictured in alluring colours, and a measure of response had been felt, the proneness of Balkan politicians to consider expediency a first law made even the most solemn assurances unstable, and nothing short of a definitely ratified alliance was worth trusting. Of such words of the wind William II. was getting weary —Servia flouted him; Roumania dallied with him; in Turkey, though he felt more sure, yet he recognised the

ruling passion for craft might undermine his position at any time; Bulgaria seemed a land of promise, but her ambitions were inimical to Turkey, and thus stultified the effect of diplomatic overtures if Turkey were to be kept friendly.

The Balkan problem became more intricate for Germany every year, and knowing as much as I do of the inner workings of political dealings in the Near East, it was forced upon me, in the face of the situation as presented above, that perilous times were ahead, and something more tangible must be secured in the way of an understanding with one of the Balkan League to enable Germany to emerge without damaged prestige from the network which had been woven during the last quarter of a century.

The fact that William II. was bound by ties of relationship to the reigning house of Greece led him to direct the course of diplomacy to a friendly understanding. It was true that King George of Greece had been a Dane, and therefore hostile in spirit to German expansion, but on the other hand a certain friendliness existed between the two rulers. The King of the Hellenes, indeed, had sent his eldest son to be educated and trained at a German military school, a period which came within the lifetime of the Emperor William I. From the academy the young Prince had become attached to a Prussian regiment of the Guards, and whilst he was drilling his soldiers on the exercise ground at Potsdam the heir to the Greek throne met and fell in love with pretty

Princess Sophie, the second youngest daughter of the then Crown Prince and of his consort the Princess Victoria. His affection was reciprocated, and though the father of the young lady, the Emperor Frederick III., died before the engagement of the lovers could be announced, the course of their affection ran smoothly, and they were married at Athens about a year after the death of the Emperor, rather to the dismay of Queen Olga of Greece, who did not like the idea of having a Protestant for her daughter-in-law. This difficulty, however, was easily surmounted when the new Crown Princess, a few months after her marriage, entered the Greek Church, a proceeding which led to a quarrel between her and her elder brother, William II. For many years brother and sister did not meet, and it was only at the deathbed of their mother, the Empress Frederick, that a reconciliation between them took place; even then it lacked sincerity.

The Princess Sophie did not trouble very much about this estrangement. She is a very clever woman, gifted with singular discernment, who has all the ambition of her mother, and certainly more tact. During the war which Greece fought with Turkey in the latter years of the last century she was the only member of the Royal Family who had the courage to say that it was bound to end in disaster, and the only person who urged the King, her father-in-law, to conclude peace before his army had been entirely annihilated. This at first made her many enemies, and as the Crown Prince was held

responsible for the defeat of the Greek army, he had perforce to leave his native shores for a considerable time, together with his family. It was during his compulsory retirement at Cronberg, the castle which the Empress Frederick had built in the Taunus Mountains, that the German Emperor began to plant the first seeds of the intimacy which was soon to reunite him to his sister and brother-in-law.

Prince Constantin was at that time still a young man. His education had imbued him with strong German sympathies and with the desire to bring German influence and German parliamentary principles into Greece. He was a fine fellow, perhaps too heavy in appearance, but handsome, and of pleasant manners and deportment. He had been at one time very unpopular in his own country, and was haunted by the desire to correct the errors which arose from his acceptance of the supreme command of the Greek army without having been sufficiently experienced for the task. It was not a disaster to him, therefore, when he saw Greece entangled in another war, for during its course he hoped he would be able to win for himself the laurels for which he longed. That hope had been fulfilled, and he believed that it was mainly because he had followed the advice of his brother-in-law. But as the military reputation of the Crown Prince grew, his relations with his own father became more and more strained on account—so, at least, it was whispered—of strong political differences which had arisen between them. The King was authoritative in his family and ruled

it with an iron hand. In that respect he had inherited the character of his parents, the late King and Queen of Denmark. Even the Queen, good and sweet as she was, failed to smooth over the differences which crept up continually and rendered life at the Court of Athens anything but pleasant. King George, who at one time felt great sympathy with the Emperor William II., now began to mistrust him, and did not look with favour upon his son's intimate friendship with him. King George of Greece was a wise and a cautious man, a sovereign with ambition, tempered, however, with extreme prudence. Owing in a large measure to his personal merits, added to his long experience as a monarch, he had acquired quite an exceptional position amidst the other crowned heads of Europe, and his advice was not infrequently sought in times of difficulty by his brother rulers.

He had a great abhorrence for what he called "a policy based on adventure," and, without having been taken into the confidence of the German Emperor, he suspected him of harbouring certain sinister designs against two European Powers closely allied to the Royal House of Greece, and furthermore feared that the Crown Prince had had his ambitions fired through the same agency. In consequence of an ancient prophecy which was popular among the Greek population of the Levant, that when a King called Constantin, married to a Queen called Sophie, should reign at Athens the Cathedral of St. Sophia would once more become a Christian church, King George had strong apprehensions that the Crown

Prince—at the suggestion of Germany—would attempt to overthrow the Sultan by force of arms, and have himself proclaimed Emperor of Byzance. His daughter-in-law, the Crown Princess, shared the opinion of King George as to the foolishness of such visions, and she, too, would have preferred that her brother, William II., should not interfere with what, after all, did not concern him. As for Queen Olga, though her relations with the King had also become rather strained during the declining years of the King's life, she shared the fears of her husband. The Crown Prince alone kept up a regular correspondence with his brother-in-law. Personally, from certain private evidence which I cannot divulge, I am satisfied that Constantin most certainly entered heart and soul into the plans of the Emperor William II. in the direction of Turkey.

Prince Constantin, however, did not remain for long under the influence of these illusions, but when the fatal shot fired at his father in Salonika had raised him to the throne of the Hellenes, he quickly discovered the impossibility of the stories which he had been told by his brother-in-law. When responsibility of government had been thrust on him he realised that his first duty consisted in preserving the patrimony of his own children. The indulgence of the reader must be asked, too, in regard to an incident which was currently believed by the greater number of the few political agents who learned of it. I have no absolute proof, but, as I say, it is certain that something extraordinary had taken place to cause the

Constantin I. of Greece

George I. of Greece

young King so to change his attitude, and that "something" was credited by the few to whom I refer as being in the position to know to be a strange letter which had reached him almost on the eve of his father's murder. This communication told him in so many words that a great change was impending, and that very soon he would be able to show of what stuff he was made. In spite of its impertinent and offensive tone, this cursory missive had a ring of truth in it and had painfully jarred on the nerves of the then Crown Prince. Two days later the King was murdered in broad daylight in one of the most frequented streets of Salonika.

Shortly after the death of King George of Greece I was passing through Athens, and took occasion to call upon King Constantin. A reminder that I had known him in Berlin when he was a boy secured my admission. I found him very little changed on the whole, and he received me most warmly, talking about the time when he had been in Berlin before his marriage. He asked me numerous questions concerning various of his friends of those early days, and seemed interested to learn that most of them were still alive and well. Then the conversation turned on recent events, especially on the assassination of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his consort. To my surprise the King did not accept my remark that the murderer was a Servian, who had been actuated simply by a blind hatred of Austria and of her future Emperor. On the contrary, he remarked that the existence of such a plot had been proved in quite an irrefutable manner.

How, he did not enlighten me, but contented himself by remarking: "I don't like saying too much, and I have not seen the men who awaited the arrival of the automobile in which the Archduke rode, but I feel certain that there exists a link between them and the misguided Greek who fired at my poor father. More than that, I would not be surprised to find that the same person was initially responsible for both crimes."

This assertion of the young King struck me as absolutely uncanny. Who, I asked myself, could have an interest in the murder of these people? To whom did they constitute an obstacle?

I could find no reply.

CHAPTER XIX

THE FAILURE OF GERMAN INTRIGUE IN MONTENEGRO

THE aged King Nicholas of Montenegro has never looked leniently upon German intrigue, despite strong inducements. Not even would he consent to promise an attitude of neutrality—he refused to be tied by a single thread which might hamper his independence. The influence exercised by the aged King over the Slav races was in itself an important factor in all matters connected with the development of that great Slav Empire about which so many people had dreamed in Russia as well as all over the world. On the other hand, Germany had long cherished the desire to stand forth as the protector of the Slavs, either on her own account or indirectly through Austria. The Emperor William knew that under existing conditions the other Powers would not allow him to exercise dominance in the Balkans, and he soon found out that Austria was not strong enough to be able to dictate to the Balkan States. It therefore became desirable to win over one or other of the small Sovereigns whom perpetual rivalries made eager to attain a position whence they could afford to do without their neighbours. From this standpoint German

diplomacy had its attention focused upon Montenegro for a long time. The German Emperor knew very well that King Nicholas was devoted to Russia, and moreover that, with two of his daughters married to Russian Grand Dukes, it was but natural he should support to the extent of his limited resources the Russian cause in Constantinople. To counterbalance these sympathies of Nicholas I., German agents sought to capture the interest of the Crown Prince Danilo, who, because he had spent some time in Germany on various occasions, was supposed to nurse a great admiration for German ways in general and the German army in particular. Whenever Prince Danilo visited Berlin the Emperor William always invited him to dinner or to lunch, and treated him with particular friendliness. He even went so far as to find him a wife, and it was through his direct influence and co-operation that the marriage of the heir to the Montenegrin throne with the Duchess Jutta of Mecklenburg-Strelitz was arranged. Duchess Jutta was clever, and she made herself liked in her new country, and probably would have become popular had she only given her husband an heir, but her marriage remained childless.

With the arrival of Duchess Jutta at Cetinje intrigue entered the life of the Court and proved a source of much anxiety to those who, from behind the scenes, watched the development of the plots. In order more fully to understand these intrigues it will be helpful to look into the reign of Nicholas I. of Montenegro and to note the success of his long kingship.

The King is certainly an exceedingly clever sovereign. He transformed a strip of land into a kingdom which, small as it is, commands general respect, partly through its geographical position, and partly through the personality of its ruler. At the time he was elected Prince a good many people looked upon the Montenegrins as an almost savage tribe. Since that day Montenegro has won for itself name and fame through the heroic conduct of its children during the continual wars with Turkey in which it took such a prominent part. After the campaign of 1877 Montenegro became the object of flattery on the part of Turkey, who saw in her an obstacle to Servian ambitions, as well as a country whose progress might checkmate the ambitions of Bulgaria, which was then beginning its career as an independent State. Prince Nicholas was a man in the prime of life, with a splendid physique and a prepossessing appearance. He had won for himself the reputation of being a faithful friend and a loyal adversary, and had contrived to appeal to the feelings and to the sympathies of the Tsar Alexander III., who once had gone so far as to declare publicly that he considered him as the only true and sincere friend that Russia possessed. The words made a great stir at the time, but they gave to Prince Nicholas a very strong position in the Balkans, where one grew very quickly to consider him as the depository of the political secrets of Russia and of her plans concerning the future of the Slav cause in Europe. He was clever enough to make the most, and perhaps even more than was necessary, of the

legend that, in consequence, gradually arose around his name; and as a good father, careful of the future of his numerous family, he applied himself to the task of finding suitable husbands for his six daughters, all of whom were educated in Petersburg at the Convent of Smolna, an establishment under the immediate protection of the Empress. The young ladies remained at the convent for a year or two after their education had been completed, and went out a good deal into society, where they soon made themselves extremely popular. The eldest two Montenegrin princesses captivated two Russian princes, the Grand Duke Peter Nicolaievitch and Duke George of Leuchtenberg, and when the weddings took place the Tsar gave the brides their trousseaux—and also a dowry, if all that one hears is true. Prince (his domain was not then a kingdom) Nicholas went to Russia for the weddings, and was made a great fuss of.

Since the marriage of his daughters he has visited the Russian capital many times, and has used the occasions to further the interests of his little kingdom, and he finally had the cleverness to win from the Tsar the guarantee of a regular subsidy, which is being paid to him to the present day. Montenegro was a young country, and a poor one into the bargain; therefore no one objected to the generosity exercised by the Tsar in regard to a man who had given him such proofs of his devotion. There were some who had the audacity to ask in what these proofs consisted, but any who ventured to make such unpleasant remarks were very soon cowed, and the

devotion of Montenegro and its ruler to the Russian cause became one of those established legends that it would have been dangerous to deny or even not to acknowledge. It was proof of the supreme ability of Prince Nicholas that he could so persuade the world, and in this, as in everything else, he showed himself a consummate diplomat. Each time he went to Russia he returned laden with promises, whilst he himself kept silent as the Sphinx in the Egyptian desert.

His fifth daughter married Francis Joseph, Prince of Battenberg, and in that way he assured himself of the sympathies of Queen Victoria, whose youngest daughter, the Princess Beatrice, was wedded to another Battenberg brother; and at last he achieved his greatest triumph in the matrimonial line when the dark-eyed Princess Hélène was united to the Prince of Naples, the only son of King Humbert of Italy and of his lovely consort Queen Margherita, "the Pearl of Savoy" as she was called in her own country.

It was about the time of Hélène's marriage that the Emperor William II. sought the friendship of Prince Nicholas. A little known but perfectly true circumstance is that the German Emperor suggested this alliance to the King of Italy. Owing to the peculiar relationship always existing between the Italian Royal Family and the Vatican, it was impossible to think of a Catholic wife for the heir to the throne. Bearing in mind how considerably such a fact narrowed the circle of eligible princesses, William II. suggested to Humbert that

among the splendidly beautiful daughters of Nicholas of Montenegro a suitable consort might be found.

Owing to this excellent advice the Prince of Naples journeyed to Cetinje, with the happy result that the betrothal to Hélène was soon announced. In this act the German Emperor knew very well what he was about and that nothing but advantage to everybody could come out of his hint. He had, moreover, taken care to keep himself well informed as to the personal charms and qualities of the young princesses, and when after his marriage Prince Victor Emmanuel was found to be ardently in love with his wife, William II. congratulated himself on the foresight that had persuaded him to have a hand in the happiness of one of his friends and at the same time assured him of the gratitude of Nicholas of Montenegro, whom he took care to inform that the match had been partly his work.

The Berlin Court and the Quirinal had long been upon excellent terms with each other, and in consequence William II. felt sure of being able to exercise through its medium some influence on the Prince of Montenegro in order to incline him to favour the plans of Germany.

There came a moment when the Emperor William II. ventured to appeal to the Quirinal and to ask the young King (not long after his accession) whether, if such came about, he would undertake the office of mediator in settling the terms of a defensive and offensive alliance between Germany and Montenegro. Victor Emmanuel declined under the pretext that his father-in-law was a

man of such authoritative character that he would never dare suggest to him anything in general, and especially anything in which politics were concerned. This suave reply did not discourage William II., who then undertook to do his work alone, and sent me to Cetinje with secret instructions to sound the Prince (as he still was at that time) and to find out what were his views upon the subject.

I duly reached the Montenegrin capital, and almost immediately after my arrival was received by Prince Nicholas in the simple manner in which he welcomed all his visitors. The palace, as it was pompously called, reminded one rather of the country house of a simple gentleman of moderate means in Europe; the only characteristic thing about the place was the number of men armed to the teeth that crowded around it, not for the protection of the royal household, but all wishing to ask something of their ruler, to crave some advice, or to make some complaint. He listened to each one more as a father would than a sovereign. One could not help being struck with this familiarity; it united the people and their ruler, and it was so entirely genuine, so different from anything one could see or meet with anywhere else, that it has remained a bright memory. The Prince noticed my surprise, but simply smiled and kindly remarked, "We are not in Europe," adding, "We live more simply here than you do in Berlin." After coffee and a pipe, Nicholas began questioning me as to the reasons which had brought me over to Cetinje, and

inquired whether I had been entrusted with a mission of some kind. This I evaded, explaining as the desire to see a new country my excursion to the Black Mountain. He nodded and at once started talking about the Emperor William. "He has been very kind to me whenever I have seen him," he said, "and I only wish I could be of some use to him later on. I am sure he is a wise monarch and one who always thinks of the needs of his subjects. And then think what a responsible position he occupies. The peace of the world depends almost entirely upon him."

"The Emperor has constantly been working for the cause of peace," I replied, "and one of the reasons why he admires Your Highness so much is that he knows you have done the same thing in the Balkan Peninsula."

"Ah! but what can I do?" answered the Prince. "I am so helpless in the face of all the rivalries that abound among our Slav brethren and of the cruelty and oppression exercised by the Turks in regard to them. I do what I can, but how often have not events proved too strong for me? We are being threatened from all sides, and Austria never spares an occasion to show to us that she means to crush our independence. Then, on the obverse, Austria is hated by all Slavs, who seize every occasion they can find to attack her. Look at all she does in Bosnia. She is sure to annex it and Herzegovina. And do you think that the Slav populations of the Peninsula will not rise in revolt against such a fact? What can I do, then, but follow them and help them to the defence

of their rights? Ah! if I were the King of Servia or Ferdinand of Bulgaria, I might attempt to speak the language of reason, because then I would have some kind of authority vested in my hands. As it is, I am but a poor little prince of no consequence, and must needs follow the lead of others, who often tell me to hold my tongue because amidst so many kings I have no place."

I hastened to reply.

"If rumour speaks the truth, Your Highness has already more than once been entreated to change your title for that of a sovereign, but have always refused."

"Ah, yes, you have been told so; but, believe me, it is all a mistake. My subjects may have wished me to be called by the title of king, but of what consequence can be their wishes? It is Europe that has the word to say in such a matter, and so far Europe has not taken kindly to the idea—at least, has not encouraged it, and it is entirely out of the question for me to move in the matter so long as she remains silent."

"Ah, but my Emperor would be quite willing to take the initiative in the affair," I ventured to say; "he would require, though, to know what were the views of Your Highness in matters of general politics. The Emperor is upon terms of close friendship with the Sultan; he could hardly encourage any demonstrations of hostility in regard to the latter, and Montenegro has never been the friend of Turkey."

"Has never been? You are right to talk in the sense of the past," interrupted Prince Nicholas. "All those

heroic times have gone never to return, I hope. Why should we not live at peace with Islam after all? We only want the Moslems to leave us alone, and not to oppress and persecute our brethren in race and faith. If your Emperor, through his personal relations with the Sultan, could obtain us that boon, then indeed Montenegro would feel itself under an obligation to follow him in his policy far more than if he had troubled to help me personally to get a title, which, though it would add considerably to my authority, could not contribute in any way whatsoever to my happiness."

"I am certain that the influence of my Sovereign will always be exercised in the cause of humanity," was my answer, "and the very fact that he has asked me not to neglect an opportunity, should it arise during my journey to this beautiful country, to obtain some idea of the intentions of Your Highness proves it once more. He is convinced that Montenegro is the dominant factor of the whole situation in the Balkans, and I am sure it would be of sincere interest to understand whether you would take part in any dispute, should complications ever arise, or would preserve a strict neutrality. Your Highness will probably agree with me that a decision to remain neutral in Montenegro would certainly mean that the other Balkan States would remain neutral too."

"It is very hard for me to say what I should do," replied Nicholas with quiet weight in his tone; "but if I could talk on a footing of equality with Servia and Bulgaria, and Montenegro were no longer the poor little

Nicholas I. of Montenegro

principality it is to-day, then most certainly I should do my utmost to persuade all those within reach of my words and influence that they ought to do all that is in their power in order to prevent any conflagration, should such an unhoped for calamity arise, from spreading beyond its original limits."

Try as I would, I could not induce the Prince to give me his views in a clearer or more categorical form. He remained impenetrable, and I left him with the conviction that the only manner by which one could hope to enlist his sympathies would be to help him in his ambition to become a king.

It will be remembered by the student of history that when Prince Nicholas was made a king later on, it was the Cabinet of Berlin which agitated most zealously for the recognition of Nicholas as Sovereign of Montenegro and for the erection of that principality into a kingdom.

When the thing had become a fact the new Monarch paid a visit to William II. in Berlin for the ostensible purpose of expressing his thanks. The Emperor received him even more warmly than he had done on the occasion of his previous visits, and tried to persuade him to give an opinion as to his intentions in the delicate matter of European influence in the Balkans. But the Emperor was soon to realise that few men have grasped so thoroughly as Nicholas of Montenegro the problem of never allowing oneself to be inveigled into expressing an opinion on a dangerous subject.

Some time later, when his troops had taken Scutari

in Albania by storm, Nicholas was approached by a German agent. He refused to consider any proposals unless he was definitely left in possession of Scutari. It was impossible, for Germany was inextricably involved to support Turkey, and so Nicholas—the ruler of the smallest kingdom in Europe—threw down the gauntlet and followed the example of Russia and England by declaring war on Germany.

CHAPTER XX

TSAR FERDINAND OF BULGARIA

MY journey to Sofia to see the Bulgarian King—or Tsar as he preferred to be called—was one of those secret missions with which I was entrusted by Wilhelmstrasse whenever they desired to ascertain things it would not have been easy to discover through official channels. I was known to be fond of travelling, and by assuming the rôle of an *enfant terrible* to whom years had not brought discretion was forgiven much, and on the whole enabled to render certain services to the Emperor and the Fatherland which under other conditions would hardly have been possible.

When I started upon my so-called pleasure trip to Bulgaria the Treaty of Bucharest had just been signed, and the whole of the Balkans still bore the impress of the devastating struggle. Bulgaria had been humbled to the dust, and Servia, though triumphant in appearance, had bought her victory at the cost of enormous sacrifices. Greece had not fared much better, and that degree of superiority was only due to the rare intelligence of her Premier, M. Venizelos.

The Emperor William II. had been rather sorry to

see the defeat of King Ferdinand. He had an admiration for success, and in Ferdinand's case the defeat was the only set-back in a career of marked progress. King Ferdinand had been a younger son of a family which by dint of patience and of ability had succeeded in pushing itself forward and in taking possession of several thrones in Europe. The Coburgs were ever an ambitious race, and the present King of Bulgaria is no exception to the rule.

When Prince Ferdinand was invited to take up the task which Prince Alexander of Battenberg had found himself unable to tackle, he had consulted his mother, the famous Princess Clementine of Orleans. The Princess was one of those women born to great things, built after the model of Maria Thérèsa or of the great Catherine, but who had found herself compelled all her life to occupy a subordinate position in which her rare faculties had been deprived of exercise. Her marriage had not been a very happy one, and her sons had also not altogether satisfied her maternal ambitions. She saw suddenly in her old age the possibility to realise the secret dreams and longings of her youth and, under the name of a beloved child, at last to have something to say in the destinies of Europe. Princess Clementine nursed great ambitions. The friend of the Jesuits and the supporter of the Catholic cause wherever she went, she had brought up Prince Ferdinand with special care, and had kept him so entirely under her own wing that he had acquired a love for fine dresses and jewels and rather feminine tastes; but at the same

time he had strongly developed literary and artistic tastes and had become most certainly, from the intellectual point of view, a cultivated and remarkable man.

When the Princess advised her son to accept his election as Prince of Bulgaria she did not intend him to fail, but brought to his help all the resources of which she was possessed, and all her vast wealth. She accompanied Prince Ferdinand to Sofia, and established herself there, using all her rare faculties of mind and her great intelligence to win popularity for her son. She opened her doors to representatives of all the different parties, smiled at M. Stambouloff, shook hands with M. Radoslavoff, and lured to her side all the leading men in Bulgaria, whom she treated with the utmost affability, without appearing to notice their lack of manners or the incongruities of their conduct at table. She even invited the members of the national clergy to her hospitable home, and began discussing gravely with them the possibility of union with Rome, which was the one thing for which her soul craved and which she would have liked to achieve.

She spent her money freely, showing herself more than generous whenever the occasion to open her purse presented itself. She interested herself in the question of education, favoured the opening of new schools, and most of those already existing throughout Bulgaria obtained large subsidies from her. Whilst known to possess no ambition save that of furthering the fortunes of her son, she nevertheless contrived to make personal

friends for herself among his adversaries, and men of all parties were glad to appeal to her common sense and to use her as a go-between in their negotiations with the Prince. At the same time she urged her son to begin building for himself that wonderful palace of Euxinograd, which has become one of the most beautiful things of its kind in Europe. The far-seeing Princess had something else in view when she advised Prince Ferdinand to erect it. She wanted him to have a place of refuge where, if the necessity arose, he could defy any revolution that might break out in Sofia and where he would be safe from any attempt to kill or kidnap him, as had happened to poor Prince Alexander of Battenberg. Euxinograd is built on the seashore, and its towers command an extraordinary view. A yacht always at anchor in the roads would provide an easy escape from danger. Princess Clementine never left things to chance. This extreme caution, coupled with great determination and an almost ferocious strength of will, has been inherited by her son, who has given proofs of it during the whole time he has occupied the throne of Bulgaria.

When Prince Ferdinand arrived in Sofia he found the position there extremely difficult. Not one among the great Powers wished to recognise him. Russia simply ignored his pretensions, and the Tsar Alexander III. declared that the less he heard about him the more pleased he would be. This was a serious check in the political career of the new ruler of Bulgaria, and at first no one believed he could hold his own. Europe was over-

generous in snubbing Ferdinand, but he settled in Sofia without minding in the very least the fact that no one consented to acknowledge his position there as either stable or even legitimate, and he started to govern the country that had placed him at its head with the utmost coolness and determination. He was always cheerful, always amiable, always pleasant. He held long interviews with his cook every morning that proved most satisfactory for those whom he invited to sit at his hospitable board, and he assumed an indifference to the judgments of his adversaries. After a few months the world ceased laughing at him, and after a few years it was he who laughed at it.

Nevertheless, those first days of sovereignty were indeed a hard trial for the Prince. For one thing, Ferdinand discovered very soon after he had set his foot on Bulgarian soil that a strong party was intriguing against him. He had found that the one powerful man in Sofia was M. Stambouloff, who had been nicknamed "The King-maker," and whose word was law. M. Stambouloff and Prince Ferdinand did not agree well together, being both men of strong opinions and of most unyielding character, with one essential difference, however. The Bulgarian statesman, with all his faults and a certain cruelty in his nature which it is impossible to deny, was incapable of deceit. Prince Ferdinand, on the contrary, was trained to the belief that the end justified whatever means were employed to attain it. It was not long before these two men showed an open antagonism

to each other. Stambouloff declared with emphasis that he could not enter into Ferdinand's plans, and did not take the trouble to conceal his reasons.

In the end M. Stambouloff was murdered one evening as he was returning home. He was very popular; many people mourned him sincerely, but at the same time it was felt all over the country that his hostility in regard to the Prince might have brought about serious difficulties in the future.

With Ferdinand things prospered, the people recognised in him a leader after their own heart, and the country was certainly making favourable progress. In the meantime Ferdinand had married the Princess Marie Louise of Bourbon-Parme, the eldest of the nineteen children of the exiled Duc de Parme. She was a sweet woman with lovely hazel eyes and eminently attractive. Hers was not a happy married life, and she must have regretted more than once the park of the Villa Pianore, near Lucques, where she had spent her childhood. Ferdinand treated her with a roughness that was the more wonderful that he was generally studiously polite to all those with whom he came into contact; but the straightforward character of the Princess jarred on his nerves. It was not remarkable, therefore, that Ferdinand and his gentle wife became estranged, and that the Princess Clementine continued as the moving spirit at the little Court of Sofia, her word law, and her influence and authority beyond dispute.

For many years Clementine really ruled under her

Ferdinand I. of Bulgaria

son's name, and during that period Bulgaria developed in an astonishing manner. The Princess never let an occasion pass for furthering Bulgarian interests, whilst saying the whole time that it was Prince Ferdinand alone whose initiative brought about the various reforms that were being prosecuted with commendable activity. Ferdinand's mother was liked and appreciated at every Court in Europe, and furthered the interests of her son with an energy that was quite wonderful in such an old woman. Mother and son loved each other with a warm, strong affection, and the Prince had the good sense to submit to her judgment. Being under the influence of the Jesuits, it was the lasting hope of Princess Clementine to restore the Bulgarian Church to the arms of Rome. It would be a long story, with far more ramifications than can be set out in logical sequence, to explain the policy by which the Princess sought to carry out her ambition. Suffice it to say that it was this great aim on her part that has always actuated Ferdinand's keen hope that one day he will be acknowledged as head of the Christian Church in the Near East, and be proclaimed as such from the altar steps of the Cathedral of St. Sophia in Constantinople.

When Princess Clementine died she had the satisfaction of knowing that no mother could have done more for a son. The old internal antagonisms had been swept away, the coldness of Europe had been thawed, and, from being a prince on sufferance, Ferdinand was in a fair way to becoming a king, his principality converted

into a kingdom, and his influence a deciding factor in Balkan politics.

Very friendly relations existed between the Princess Clementine and the German Emperor, who after having failed for some time to propitiate her, had suddenly succeeded in doing so. The fact is, that the shrewd old lady understood very well that it would be a master stroke on her part to secure the good will of William II. for her son without seeming eager to obtain it. William II., always watchful of everything that was going on in the East, and desirous of assuring himself of allies capable of counteracting the action of Russia in the Balkans, was but too glad to see the Princess Clementine appeal to him when certain difficulties arose. He extended to her as well as to Prince Ferdinand all the help it was in his power to give. He persuaded the Austrian Government to forget that the Prince of Bulgaria had accepted the throne of that country in defiance of its opposition, and he brought about an interview with the latter and the Emperor Francis Joseph, which was the first step toward an official recognition of his election as ruler of unruly Bulgaria.

This was an important result, but so long as the Tsar Alexander III. was alive Prince Ferdinand could not feel himself secure at Sofia. The Tsar could not digest "that adventurer," as he called him, who in defiance of Russia and of Russia's desires had ventured to instal himself at Sofia. William II. did try once to say a word to the Tsar to the effect that Prince Ferdinand was after all not

so bad, but no reply was vouchsafed to this remark. Matters therefore remained in abeyance until the world was startled by the news that the Tsar was dying. Very soon Nicholas II. reigned in his place.

It was then that the German Emperor, always intent upon great schemes, made a suggestion for winning the favour of Russia, which met with full sympathy from Princess Clementine of Coburg, to whom he mentioned it, and received the tacit sanction of the Jesuits, whose influence over her was so great. Unknown to William II., the same idea had already entered the mind of another. The plan was that Prince Ferdinand of Coburg should have his children publicly baptised into the Greek Orthodox faith. What followed is the subject of another chapter.

CHAPTER XXI

THE HISTORY OF A CONVERSION

COMING as it did from people who had always been considered strong supporters of the Roman Church, the scheme for the re-baptism of the Bulgarian Crown Prince Boris, to which reference was made in the last chapter, at first sight appeared monstrous. In reality it was not so extraordinary as it seemed. The Greek Orthodox Church was not the same as the National Bulgarian Church, though many people believed them to be identical. The Greek Church in the East is under the sway of the Patriarch of Constantinople or of the Holy Synod in Petersburg, whilst the Bulgarian Church is independent, with its own hierarchy. The leaders of the Bulgarian Church were in a state of continual revolt against the persistent attempts to bring it under the dominion of the Constantinople Community and its Patriarch.

The Princess Clementine had long been working at the Vatican to secure the recognition of the Bulgarian Church by the Pope, and of thus bringing it back into the bosom of the Church of Rome. She was aided in that enterprise by the Jesuits, who had established colleges and schools

in Bulgaria, and who were agitating with considerable success to cause the bulk of the people to favour the reunion of the National Church with the Latin community. Prince Ferdinand fully supported the movement. There was nothing in the tenets of the National Bulgarian Church that could be considered as distinctly antagonistic to Catholicism. Therefore, argued Princess Clementine, it was easy to bring about a fusion of these two forces which, working in unison, might in time become a most important factor in European politics. A reconciliation with Rome could not fail to make Prince Ferdinand popular.

Even before the death of Alexander III. the question of the conversion of Prince Ferdinand's eldest son had been raised. An intimate friend of the Prince had touched upon it during a conversation with Prince Lobanoff, who had just been appointed at the head of the Russian Foreign Office. This conversation had taken place in Paris, where Lobanoff was enjoying a short holiday. The interview took place at the Café Anglais, on the boulevards, where the confidant of the ambitious schemes of Prince Ferdinand had invited the Russian statesman to dine. Prince Lobanoff had said nothing to these overtures, not caring to compromise himself at random, but on his return to Petersburg he fostered the idea, believing that it would prove a good pretext for bringing about a reconciliation between Bulgaria and Russia. Alexander III. had died in the meantime, and Nicholas II. did not entertain the same antagonism to Prince Fer-

dinand. When, therefore, the latter once more approached the Russian Government, his request that the Tsar might sanction the re-baptism of his little boy according to the rites of the Greek Church met with acceptance. The Tsar even promised to send a representative to Sofia to attend the ceremony, and Prince Ferdinand proceeded to make public his decision as soon as he had ascertained for sure that Russia was to show publicly her acquiescence.

To the surprise of Prince Ferdinand a good many persons in Bulgaria disapproved of the measure, among them his own wife, the Princess Marie Louise. Her honest soul and simple mind refused to accept such a political apostasy, and her strictly Roman Catholic convictions rose up in horror and disgust at the thought of her child being thrust into another faith than her own. At first she declared that she would never consent to the thing, and when told that her sanction or otherwise was of no consequence, expressed her resolution to leave Sofia rather than approve by her presence an act to which she entirely dissented. Princess Marie characterised the act as a shameful political concession not to the necessities of the moment, but to further the ambition of her husband.

At first she hoped that the Pope would come to her help, and wrote imploring his assistance. But Leo XIII. was far too shrewd a statesman to do aught else but pity and comfort her. As a matter of fact, Leo XIII. knew somewhat of the details of the contemplated conversion,

for Princess Clementine had spent some weeks in Rome just before Princess Marie Louise had sent her pathetic appeal. Princess Clementine had conferred with several of the prelates, and among others the Prefect of the Congregation of the Propaganda, Cardinal Ledochowski, a Pole, and a man whose secret desire, ever since he had received the red hat, had been to bring about a reunion of the Latin and the Greek Churches. He hated Russia, and knew that the establishment of a *modus vivendi* would procure for the Jesuits a recognition throughout the Balkan Peninsula of the Church discipline of Rome, and certainly, therefore, deal a considerable blow to Russian influence. At all events it was a game worth trying, and the Jesuits entered into it with zeal. The Archbishop of Sofia was told that if he would only consent to help Prince Ferdinand, and work together with him to bring about a reconciliation between his clergy and the Church of Rome, the See of Sofia would be raised to the rank of a Patriarchate, and he should be put at its head, thus being relieved from rendering obedience to the Patriarch of Constantinople.

In exchange for this advancement he was to allow the Jesuits to instal themselves all over Bulgaria, to open schools, and to make converts. A message from Pope Leo himself was handed to him, which said that the blessing of God would follow him if he would only work for the spiritual welfare of Bulgaria and help the Church of that country to keep its position national and independent; and, finally, large sums of money were placed at

his disposal, a proceeding which helped a good deal to a decision.

In this adventure—for one can hardly call it anything else—everybody was the dupe of somebody else. The Russian Foreign Office believed that by entering into the views of Prince Ferdinand it would definitely sever his connection with Austria; the Vatican hoped to bring about through his medium the union of the Latin and Greek Churches, which had been the subject of its secret desire for centuries; Austria hoped that the influence of the Jesuits would make her popular in the Balkans, where she knew very well that she was not liked; the Princess Clementine hoped that the position of her beloved son would become safer and stronger after the heavy sacrifice he had accepted in order to consolidate his dynasty; Prince Ferdinand hoped that by this step he was getting nearer to the fulfilment of his cherished schemes to be recognised as King of Bulgaria; the Emperor William alone hoped nothing, because he knew that his suggestions had borne fruit and that whatever happened it could only be to his benefit.

A curious incident in this most curious historical episode was related to me some time later. It seems that after the departure of the envoy who had represented the Tsar at the christening of Prince Boris, the latter's father wrote to William II. an account of the ceremony, adding the remark that the only thing for which he felt sorry was that he had not been able to have a photograph taken of it, which he would have liked to send to Berlin,

but that the Archbishop of Sofia had objected to the idea. He concluded with the words: "I feel sure that Your Majesty would have appreciated it with the sense of humour which you possess."

A few months later Prince Ferdinand went to Russia to present his compliments to the Tsar on the occasion of the latter's coronation. In Moscow he was more or less shunned by everybody; even the Imperial Family treated him with a certain reserve. To a chosen few he unburdened his soul, and, when speaking to them about the conversion of his son, added that he himself was studying the Orthodox religion, as he might possibly follow his son's example. The world, he added, had attributed unworthy motives to him that were absolutely inconsistent with facts. "I hope," he continued, "that my children will reign in Bulgaria after I am dead and gone; and I have done what I thought it my duty to do in order to smooth the way for them in the future. A sovereign who professes another religion to that of his people finds himself always, at one time or other, in conflict with them. I wished my son to be spared this dilemma, and so decided that he had better be brought up in the faith which is that of his country." One thing, however, Ferdinand achieved during the weeks he spent in Moscow. He had several interviews with the German Ambassador, Prince Radolin, and through him conveyed to William II. his personal impressions of what he had seen and observed.

Before taking leave of the Emperor and Empress he

had expressed the desire to introduce to them his wife, the Princess Marie Louise, who had returned to Sofia from the shores of the Riviera, where she had spent some months after her abrupt departure from Bulgaria. The Empress of Russia replied that she would feel delighted to make the acquaintance of the Princess, upon which the programme of a visit was fixed there and then by Prince Ferdinand himself.

About eighteen months later he visited Russia once more, this time accompanied by his consort. They were received at Peterhof with great pomp. Little Prince Boris was with his parents, attended by his tutor, a Bulgarian monk, who never left him and whose presence at the side of the boy excited a good deal of curiosity and even a certain amount of interest in Petersburg. The Princess also won all hearts, and altogether the visit was a greater success than one could have expected.

Prince Ferdinand, encouraged by this reception, began to plan visits to other European Courts, and probably would have carried out his intention had not Fate interfered. The Princess Marie Louise died most unexpectedly in childbirth, and her husband had perforce to resign himself to months of quiet life.

Ferdinand's mother hastened to his side, arriving from Vienna in the middle of winter, and installed herself at the palace of Sofia. She took up the education of the motherless children of her son, and watched over them with a devotion that left nothing to be desired. Under her guidance the two boys developed quite wonderfully,

both physically and intellectually. She won their confidence, and by dint of much tenderness ruled them without the slightest sign of friction.

Prince Ferdinand allowed her considerably more authority in his household than he had ever extended to his wife. Politically, too, he never took a step without her advice and concurrence; and when at last the Princess Clementine died, with her vanished the real Sovereign of Bulgaria.

So long as Princess Clementine lived the ambitions of Prince Ferdinand were kept under a cloak, which he hastened to discard the moment that she was no longer at his elbow. He was determined to have a royal diadem on his brow, and as circumstances did not altogether favour such a consummation, he made up his mind to come to their rescue. Ferdinand had worked very hard at the organisation of the Bulgarian army, and had even gone to the length of providing it with German military instructors, much to the dismay of the General Staff in Petersburg. The result was that the ruler of Bulgaria believed the moment had come when he might force down the throat of Europe a proclamation converting his principality into a kingdom, and in order to be able to achieve this desirable result he asked his great friend William II. to back him up with the weight of his influence. The German Emperor was delighted, but he was far too shrewd to engage himself in an adventure that did not concern him personally. He therefore advised Prince Ferdinand to turn toward Austria.

CHAPTER XXII

THE PERSUADING OF TURKEY

WHEN, after the outbreak of the present war, it began to be whispered that Turkey might be persuaded to take part, a good many people laughed outright. What gain, they asked, could she achieve by mixing herself up in a conflict which it was undeniably to her advantage to watch from the point of view of a neutral Power? She had just gone through a war which, but for an unforeseen incident, might have ended disastrously for her. She had not yet succeeded in liquidating the costs of this war, and her credit stood about as low as it possibly could. Albania had been definitely wrested from her, and though she still held hopes of being able to win back this province, no reasonable being thought that these hopes could ever be realised.

Her immediate interest, at least so it seemed, would best be served by remaining quiet and making use of the opportunity to reorganise her armies, her finances, and her general administration during a time when neither Russia, nor France, nor England, nor any other Power in the world could possibly interfere with her.

When, therefore, Rumour said that Turkey had suddenly developed warlike instincts and was going to seek a quarrel with her traditional enemy Russia, friends and enemies alike agreed that madness was the only possible explanation for such conduct, unless she were actuated by reasons about which the world knew nothing.

I am going to try and explain these underlying currents to my readers, warning them at the same time that it is quite possible I shall not be quite accurate in my tale, as some of the darker shadows of the intrigue are not within my personal knowledge. But what I do know is sufficient to prove clearly what kind of influences were set in motion to persuade Turkey that a bold step in favour of the dual alliance—for Italy may be counted out—would bring innumerable benefits to the land of the Moslem and restore her rank as a great Power.

When the second Balkan War had ended in triumph for Turkey and she recovered part of her lost territories, it would still have been possible to compel her to give up Adrianople had Europe collectively decided that it ought to remain in the possession of Servia or of Bulgaria. Unfortunately, Europe was not at all united on the point. The misfortune was that neither Servia nor Bulgaria inspired sympathy. Bulgaria, by her perversity and her ruthlessness in provoking a conflict with her Slav brethren, was considered as a false and untrustworthy nation; moreover, she had incurred the complete indifference of Russia. On the other hand, Servia stood on the

brink of a serious antagonism in regard to Austria, and the latter Power would never have consented to her retaining such an important stronghold as Adrianople.

Under these conditions the position of the various Cabinets whose task it was to bring about the conclusion of a peace urgently needed not only by the belligerents but also by the whole of Europe, for whom this everlasting Balkan question was a source of constant danger, became most difficult. When, therefore, Germany tentatively suggested through the medium of her ambassador in London, Prince Lichnowsky, that the best thing to do would be tacitly to accept accomplished facts and leave Adrianople in the hands of the Turk, there was a feeling of general relief all round. Turkey was told that, provided she behaved like a good child, she would be allowed to retain possession of the town which she had won back from a demoralised foe.

Turkey promised everything—and, of course, did nothing. Whether Turkey was honest of intention is another question. Certainly her statesmen were not. Enver Pasha and the other leading spirits of the Committee of Union and Progress were clever, unscrupulous, quick at seizing hold of the slightest mistake on the part of their antagonists, anything but honest in the sense we understand the term in Europe.

When things began to look black in Mid-Europe, Berlin was not slow in advising Enver Pasha of what had been done for his country. Enver Pasha knew very well that this service was far from having been a disinterested

one, but he knew, too, that it was to his interest to make common cause with Germany, who alone was seeking the friendship of Turkey.

It was at this period of the crisis that large sums of money were remitted to Constantinople, not only to the credit of the Ottoman Government, but also to the account of Enver Pasha, the Sheikh-ul-Islam, and several influential members of the Committee of Union and Progress. It became known also that a German mission, headed by an officer of high military rank (General Liman von Sanders), was about to start for Turkey, to be placed at the service of the Sultan for the purpose of carrying on the thorough reorganisation of the Turkish army on German lines.

Russia objected to this mission; she felt that it was a blow directed against her, and that it was bound sooner or later to bring about a rupture of her relations with Turkey, which up to then had been quite tolerable. The Russian Ambassador in Constantinople, M. de Giers, though not exactly a Talleyrand, was an excellent and conscientious diplomat of much experience, who knew the East very well and the Turks even better. He hastened to write to his Government that this interference of Germany in the internal affairs of the Ottoman Empire was certain to bring about most unpleasant and perhaps even unexpected results. M. Sazonov then asked the German Ambassador in Petersburg (Count de Pourtalès) for an explanation. He was told that there was no intention on the part of the Berlin Cabinet to interfere in

any way whatsoever in the administration of the Turkish Empire, and that the mission of General von Sanders was only a continuation of the one which had previously been controlled by Field-Marshal von der Goltz. He was further assured that the mission was of a purely military character, and that the officers about to start for Constantinople had been ordered to resign their commissions in the German army before offering their services to the Sultan. He spoke in the most conciliatory terms, and even offered to restrict the activity of General von Sanders to Asia Minor, where he would command raw recruits, and thus not be in a position to influence things at Constantinople and in European Turkey, where the greater part of the Ottoman forces were quartered.

The Russian Foreign Office accepted the explanations of Count de Pourtalès, and orders were given to the newspapers not to criticise the subject of the mission of General von Sanders any further. The Tsar personally was absolutely convinced of the pacific dispositions of his Imperial cousin at Berlin. The British Government, too, for some reason or other, thought it better to pass in silence the departure of so many German officers for Constantinople.

A month or two afterwards, in June, the Emperor William II. invited a British squadron to visit him at Kiel, and showed himself more than usually polite toward its commanding officer, Admiral Sir George Warrender. Indeed, the Emperor William expressed the desire to be allowed, in his character of British admiral, to review the

squadron. At the dinner which he gave in honour of the occasion the Emperor spoke in a most flattering manner of the pleasure he had experienced in being able to welcome at his table officers belonging to the glorious British Fleet. Curiously enough, at the same moment another squadron of the British Fleet was being entertained at Petersburg.

It was during the visit of the British squadron to Kiel that the assassination of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand took place at Sarajevo. A few days later, just before he started for Norway, William II. caused a ciphered message to be forwarded to Enver Pasha, who in obedience thereto hastened to Berlin. He spent two days in conference with General Moltke, the chief of the German staff, but did not see the Emperor. It was only much later that I heard anything about this incident, which had a far greater significance than one could have supposed at the time. I did not happen to be in Berlin during the brief visit of Enver Pasha; what I heard about it, therefore, did not enlighten me as to the real nature of the instructions which had been given. Later on it was reported to me that, immediately after his return to Constantinople, Enver Pasha began to make military preparations. One significant action was that he had the old forts that guarded the entrance of the Dardanelles repaired and armed with German artillery. These proceedings did not escape the vigilant eyes of the ambassadors of the Allied Powers, but it was impossible to prevent them being carried out.

Whilst all this was going on, and the first battles in France and in East Prussia were being fought, Turkey preserved a quiet and unassuming attitude. So demure she seemed that M. de Giers reported to his Government that perhaps he might yet be mistaken in his fears that she intended to begin hostilities against Russia. The only person who saw quite clearly what was going to happen, but who also was quite powerless to stop the catastrophe, was the British Ambassador, Sir Louis Mallet, who, as his despatches have revealed, gave proof of the greatest foresight and political sagacity.

In the meantime Marshal—no longer General—Liman von Sanders, was drawing back into European Turkey the numerous regiments that had been equipped and drilled in the plains of Asia Minor, and carefully following with his spies the movements of the Russian troops in the Caucasus. When the greater number of those that were quartered in that part of the country had been withdrawn, he reported to head-quarters at Berlin that he was ready for any emergency. Was it a coincidence or a definite plot that Turkey should choose a few days after the Marshal's report as the moment to bombard from her ships several towns on the Caucasian littoral? It was before war had been declared, and Turkey made excuses for her act. It was whispered in Petersburg that she had been encouraged by disaffection in the Caucasus, where the Russian Government had uncovered a vast conspiracy, but I was never able to confirm absolutely the truth of this report.

Before Turkish vessels had opened fire on Russian ships and bombarded peaceful towns such as Odessa or Batoum there had been many important conferences between Enver Pasha and the German Ambassador, Baron von Wangenheim. The Baron told Enver Pasha that Turkey could be promised no compensation or reward in the Balkans; anything in that direction would be too productive of further trouble, as Roumania, Austria, Servia, and Bulgaria all held strong views on Balkan matters. There remained, therefore, only Egypt, Algeria, and the Russian provinces forming part of the Caucasus. Egypt especially was the one point upon which both Germany and Enver Pasha, who with the Committee of Union and Progress represented the only party in the Ottoman Empire who had anything to say as to its future destinies, could agree with alacrity.

It may sound dishonourable for one in my position to say so, but the world will guess the truth ere long, that Marshal Liman von Sanders had been given special instructions regarding that part of the campaign which aimed at the Suez Canal, and a number of German staff officers had been put at his disposal for the purpose of organising a raid on Egyptian territory at the first opportune moment. Meanwhile it was settled that, in the case of a victorious war, the Khedive Abbas Hilmi was to accept a half-Turkish, half-German garrison, and that Egypt, though nominally still under the suzerainty of the Sultan, was to be given a German administration and to become to all purposes practically a German colony.

In exchange for this concession, Turkey was to receive all the money that she, or rather Enver Pasha, required; he—Enver Pasha—was ultimately to become life governor of Egypt, Abbas being retired into private life with a handsome pension. Apart from this, Kars was to be restored to Turkey, Algeria and some British provinces of India were to become Turkish colonies, and Constantinople was to be made a neutral city. Such were the broad lines of the arangement which was concluded.

I have given my thoughts at some length on this Turkish episode, as it seems to me to be instructive from more than one point of view, the most striking of which is that it proves the absolute premeditation with which the present war was prepared. If only from this exclusive point of view, the action of the Emperor William II. deserves to be considered with a particular attention, because it is pregnant with consequences impossible to foresee at present, but which may in time not inconceivably bring about the utter fall of the German Empire.

CHAPTER XXIII

EGYPT IN THE BALANCE

GERMAN designs received a distinct set-back when the British Government, a few months ago, deposed Abbas Hilmi and elevated the Khedivial chair into the throne of a Sultan. Hussein Kemal, on whom the honoured position was conferred, is a man of considerable culture, an ardent patriot, and a staunch supporter of British rule. He is the second son of the late Khedive Ismail, and uncle, therefore, to the deposed Abbas Hilmi. Prince Hussein had been suspected more than once, even in the lifetime of his father and later on during the reign of his brother, Tewfik Pasha, of having plotted with the idea of being installed as ruler of Egypt. From what I know personally of Prince Hussein, I do not believe he would have lent himself to the overthrow of either his father or his brother, but I have no doubt that he would have liked a share in the administration of Egypt rather than being kept studiously in the background, as was the case for a considerable number of years. He was an honest man, loved Egypt, and, to put it bluntly, was not such a fool as to remain blind to all that Egypt had gained since

the British had established themselves in the land and taken upon themselves the development of her huge resources. More than once he had urged on his nephew Abbas the necessity of remaining in accord with England. The Khedive, however, was entirely under the influence of Turkey and of his many German friends, and continued fatuously to dream of the overthrow of British rule.

Despite the vehemence of his protestations of sympathy with Enver Pasha, the Turkish leader had not the slightest intention of upholding Abbas Hilmi beyond a certain point. Mohammed V. simply did not count either way. The only person who felt any affection for Abbas, and who still supported him, was old Abdul Hamid, whose heart he had managed to conquer and to retain, and who, as I have told in an earlier chapter, had supplied his protégé with money on more than one occasion. Abbas professed sound Moslem principles and declared himself against the innovations brought along by the party that had overthrown Abdul Hamid, and the latter, therefore, felt grateful to him for it. Abdul had done his best for Abbas Hilmi and often advised him as to what he was to do, giving him the benefit of his long experience in political matters. Unfortunately, he did not find a docile pupil. Abbas could not be honest even with the one man who had befriended him, and he had simply flattered the old Sultan because he hoped to inherit part of the large fortune which he knew the latter had contrived to place

in safety beyond the reach of the cupidity of Enver Pasha. He was a very shrewd young man in what concerned his material interests, and showed more sagacity in that respect than in political matters. When he saw that his position was no longer secure at Cairo he managed to mortgage his estates up to the hilt, so as to get out of them all that he could previous to the sequestration which he knew was unavoidable when the eyes of England came to be opened in regard to his conduct. When he left Cairo in the spring of 1914 on his annual holiday to Constantinople, he took away with him nearly the whole of the furniture of the Abdin Palace, having rather more than a presentiment that he would not be allowed to return.

Having little discretion, he had been foolish enough more than once to tell his friends that he had managed to get into the good graces and favour of the German Emperor, and that he could rely on his protection should any difficulties arise between him and the English Agent, Lord Kitchener; and somehow, even before the question of his deposition was ever raised, the impression had got round Cairo that his departure for his usual holidays meant a permanent absence.

When I wrote the lines in which I described the trend of affairs toward a possible Turkish aggression on Suez, I did not think that a bold stroke of English diplomacy would have cut the Gordian knot of a situation that was full of danger, by showing Abbas Hilmi that he must pay the penalty of trying to be too clever. My last

expectation was that the Cabinet in London would so neatly checkmate the Emperor William II. and his influence in Turkey.

What I wrote in the earlier pages of this book when touching upon the subject of Germany's designs on Egypt I can only repeat. I will maintain my cry of warning, for I know that nothing has changed the intentions of the Emperor. He is determined to lend to weak, tottering Turkey and her unprincipled Government all the aid possible, as he believes that Turkey alone, by calling on the forces of Islam all over the world, can shatter the foundations of the British Empire.

One of the main reasons why Germany has begun this iniquitous war is that she must expand. Unfortunately, she has not realised the secret of true colonial government. Germany's idea, whether at home or abroad, consists of a military organisation reinforced by vexatious police espionage, and autocratic methods. Militarism was introduced by Prince Bismarck, and the weight of his powerful personality caused it to take deep root into the whole country. But Prince Bismarck was a genius, and he proved it by the manner in which he conducted the two great wars through which Germany won her unity. They were cruel but not ferocious wars; they were ruthless, but they did not disgrace civilisation, nor did Germany blush beneath the reprobation of a shocked and outraged world, as now she has cause to do.

To come back to the fate of the Khedive Abbas Hilmi. This unfortunate victim of his own ambition and pre-

sumption did not experience the dismay that might have been expected when he heard that he had been dispossessed of his throne. He had unbounded confidence in the power of Turkey, backed by Germany, to reinstate him, and he confided to his friends that he was not altogether sorry at the turn that events had taken, because they would give him the right, when he was back again at Cairo, to get rid of his troublesome uncle, Prince Hussein, whose usurpation had been sanctioned by his enemy England. He fully believed himself to be a martyr, and the German and Austrian Cabinets declared that he had been the victim of his honesty.

In Constantinople his conduct was warmly approved, and he was represented to the population as one who suffered for the cause of Islam. Nevertheless, when he wanted to settle permanently—or at least until the dawn of better days—in his palace at Constantinople, he was politely told that his presence there might become a source of embarrassment to the Turkish Government. He was offered the choice of two alternatives: to accept the command of the Turkish corps destined to march against Suez, or else to travel abroad. Abbas had no intention whatsoever of exposing himself to the dangers of an expedition, though he was fond of saying that he was ready to shed the last drop of his blood for the sake of the sacred principles of Islam.

The ex-Khedive then decided that it would be best to go to Vienna, where he received a warm welcome from Count Berchtold and also from the old Emperor. He

was also made much of by Viennese Society. But when it came to going to Berlin it was hinted to Abbas at the German Embassy in Vienna that, the Emperor not being in his capital, his visit had better be postponed. When the ex-Khedive offered to visit William II. at his headquarters in the field—where already two Turkish princes, nephews of the Sultan, had been affably received—he was again discomfited.

The fact was that the Emperor William was perfectly well aware that the ex-Khedive would not hesitate to act toward Germany as he had to England, and, furthermore, Abbas now possessed absolutely no personal influence over public opinion in Egypt. The ex-Khedive, finding himself repulsed by the very person whose advice he had been following blindly, wandered in the south of Germany and the north of Italy. Meanwhile he wrote to Enver Pasha to know what he was to do. Enver Pasha told him to return to Constantinople.

Such is the situation as it presents itself at the moment of writing so far as Turkey, the Balkans, and the region of the Nile are concerned. I will not mention the various intrigues that are steadily going on in Algeria, Morocco, India, and wherever Islam is the prevailing faith. In the great struggle the German Emperor has not neglected one single chance nor hesitated to adopt any means, so long as his plans were forwarded. Among the dupes whom he has made to suffer the ex-Khedive Abbas Hilmi occupies a foremost place; it is not at all unlikely that the next will be Enver Pasha.

My work is done. I have tried to put down in this book all that I know and much that I suspect concerning the great events which are shaking the whole world at the moment I write.

I shall not be forgiven for having revealed what I learned on the subject of this vast conspiracy, but at least I have the comfort of an unburdened soul.

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